Motivating eParticipation in Authoritarian Countries
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Abstract


Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) can enrich the ways in which citizens participate in civic and political matters. Indeed, many theorists on online participation, or eParticipation, proclaim the potential of digital technologies to empower citizens with convenient ways to participate in democratic processes and to hold leaders to account. However, it is not clear if and how digital technologies, notably social media, can contribute to a more democratic system and engaged public in a country where open expression is limited. This thesis studies Social Networking Sites (SNS) as Information Systems (IS) artefacts, including individuals’ motivation for using them, how their features enable participation - or not - and the impacts of their use in an authoritarian country.

Through personal interviews and focus group discussions in Uganda, this thesis finds that the common enablers of online participation in often-studied, mostly Western democratic countries are rarely translated into the offline world in an authoritarian country with one president for the last 30 years. The thesis proposes ways to increase eParticipation in authoritarian contexts, citing the social accountability sector (where the thesis shows evidence of eParticipation working) as a pathway to greater citizen participation and government responsiveness. Findings also contribute to the Information Systems artefact discourse by illuminating the political, social, technological, and information artefacts in SNS when used for eParticipation. Moreover, the thesis shows how, in contexts with a democracy deficit, resource-based theories such as the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) fall short in explaining what motivates political participation. It also explains how social networks contain the various constitutive aspects of the IS artefact – social, technical, informational and political - and how these various aspects need to be aligned for eParticipation to work.

Keywords: Civic voluntarism, IS artefact, Uganda, eParticipation, citizen participation, social networking sites, authoritarian regime, ICT4D.

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Wairagala Wakabi, Kakira-Jinja, December 2015
List of Papers

This thesis includes and discusses the findings of four papers that address different sub-questions. The papers, which are reprinted in this thesis with the authorisation of the respective publishers, are:


Other Relevant Publications


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List of Abbreviations

CVM  Civic Voluntarism Model
FGD  Focus Group Discussion
ICT  Information and Communications Technologies
ICT4D Information and Communications Technologies for Development
IT   Information Technology
IS   Information System
ISP  Internet Service Provider
SMS  Short Messaging Service
SNS  Social Networking Sites
VSAC Voluntary Social Accountability Committee
Glossary of Terms

This glossary presents definitions of terms in the context of this thesis.

**Authoritarian regime**: Authoritarian regimes are political systems often characterised by censorship and repression (Brooker, 2008), as well as limited pluralism and limited political participation. Features of authoritarianism include the existence of a single leader or small group of leaders with ultimate political authority; and belief in the supremacy of the authority of the state over all organisations in society and individuals' freedoms (Lauth, 2012). See section 3.2 for a detailed exploration of authoritarianism.

**Bottom-up participation** in initiatives and processes is initiated by civil society such as non-government organisations or groups of citizens with the aim to influence politics in some way. This is in contrast to the top-down participation that is driven by the government.

**Democracy** is a form of government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under a free electoral system (The Macquarie Dictionary, 1991). A regime can be regarded as democratic "when it allows for the free formulation of political preferences, through the use of basic freedoms of association, information and communication, for the purpose of free competition between leaders to validate at regular intervals by nonviolent means their claim to rule … without excluding any effective political office from that competition or prohibiting any members of the political community from expressing their preference" (Linz, 1975).

**Democracy deficit**: A democracy deficit, or democratic deficit, occurs when ostensibly democratic organisations or institutions (particularly governments) fall short of fulfilling the principles of democracy in their practices or operation where representative and linked parliamentary integrity becomes widely discussed (Levinson, 2007).

**eDemocracy**: relates to the online activities of governments, elected representatives, political parties and citizen groups (Kane & Patapan, 2004). Like eParticipation, eDemocracy refers to the use of ICT for participation in government–citizen processes (Susa & Grönlund, 2012).
eParticipation or electronic participation refers to “ICT-supported participation in processes involved in government and governance. Processes may concern administration, service delivery, decision making and policy making” (Avdic et al., 2007). Participation is usually used to refer to citizens’ engagement in civic matters and the conduct of public affairs. See section 4.3 for a detailed exploration of eParticipation.

eGovernment: the use of Information and Communication Technologies in public administrations combined with organisational change and new skills in order to improve public services and democratic processes (European Commission, 2003).

IS artefact: The Information System (IS) artefact is a system, itself consisting of the sub-systems of the information artefact, technology artefact and social artefact. As articulated by Lee, et al. (2015), these different sub-systems enable, interact with and transform one another, and in coming together as an IS “they ultimately serve to solve a problem or achieve a goal for individuals, groups, organisations, societies or other social units.” The IS artefact is hence a set of entities with relations among them, which make up an information system.

Information and Communications Technologies (ICT): refers to a diverse set of technological tools and resources used to communicate, and to create, disseminate, store, and manage information (Blurton, 1999). ICT is an umbrella term that includes any communication device or application, encompassing radio, television, cellular phones, computer and network hardware and software, satellite systems, as well as the various services and applications associated with them (IGI-Global, 2015). In this thesis, ICT primarily refers to the internet and mobile phones, as well as the tools used to access them and the services that they enable.

Political participation means those voluntary activities by which members of a society take part in the selection of rulers and, directly or indirectly, in the formation of public policy (McClosky, 1968). These activities typically include voting, seeking information, discussing and proselytising, attending meetings, contributing financially, and communicating with representatives. The more ‘active’ forms of participation include formal enrolment in a
party, canvassing and registering voters, speech writing and making, working on campaigns, and competing for public and party office (McClosky, 1968).

**Social Networking Site (SNS):** Also known as a Social Networking Service, these are web-based services that allow individuals to create a public profile, to create a list of users with whom to share connections, and view and cross the connections within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). The term SNS can be used to describe online discussion forums, chat rooms and other social spaces online. Popular SNS include Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Flickr, and Whatsapp.
1. Introduction

This study is in the area of eParticipation. The thesis is concerned with the way individuals use social networking sites (SNS) and similar technologies in civic and political processes in an authoritarian context. It studies how Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), notably social media, can contribute to a more democratic society and engaged public in a country where open expression is limited. It is widely believed that access to and appropriate usage of ICT can positively transform the lives of peoples and communities (Unwin, 2009; Ungana, 2008). This transformative potential of digital technologies has been widely noted by proponents of ICT-for-Development (ICT4D), who view ICT as a productive tool and platform for development (Heeks, 2010). While many ICT4D scholars have tended to focus on economic growth and poverty reduction potentialities of ICT, openness, human development, and universal access have also been recognised as areas of ICT4D. Unwin (2009) accordingly distinguished market-led ICT4D that emphasises economic growth from socially-led ICT4D that focuses on human development, including equality of access, participation, and empowerment. This thesis aligns with the latter strand, by investigating how ICT can be used for a positive development, namely a more democratic society and engaged public, in authoritarian, developing countries.

Numerous factors are ranged against eParticipation the world over, with some unique to developing and authoritarian countries. Nonetheless, eParticipation holds the potential to improve citizens’ participation in democratic governance. Therefore, while this thesis investigates the nature of and challenges to eParticipation, it ultimately takes a keen interest in charting ways to motivate more engaged online participation by citizens and leaders even in contexts where the challenges are immense. As has been noted by Sánchez-Nielsen et al. (2014), although a growing body of literature has been devoted to the main benefits and opportunities that ICT can offer in eParticipation, little is known about the driving forces that foster public participation and citizens’ active engagement.

The internet provides easy access to information and swift communications, while enabling flexible options for citizens to engage in civic matters by allowing them a choice of when and from where to participate. These attributes, as put by Weber et al. (2003), “subsidise the cost of participation” (p. 13), and are widely believed to be boosting citizens’ interest in democratic affairs and enabling some formerly excluded communities to en-
gage in civic matters (Cullen & Sommer, 2011; Sæbø et al., 2008; Gustafsson, 2012; Chadwick, 2006). But there are fears, captured by researchers such as Quintelier (2008), Wojcieszak (2009), and Shah et al., (2005), that the effect of the Internet on offline participation could be minimal, or indeed negative. Understanding how ICT, such as SNS, is affecting participation is even more important in authoritarian countries, where the state seeks to maintain overbearing control on information, and citizens’ legitimate actions online can attract reprisals.

The Arab spring, for one, provided some evidence of the role that social media, such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, can play in creating safe communication channels for citizens to coordinate collective opposition or to express their dissent in the public sphere (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012; Aman & Jayroe, 2013; Howard et al., 2011); gather and spread information to counter the propaganda and apparatus of the repressive state (Manrique & Mikail, 2011; Allagui, 2014); and reduce transaction costs for protest organizers and present rapid and powerful channels for disseminating messages, images, and frames (Lynch, 2011). Nonetheless, it has been suggested that the role of ICT in instigating and organisation, or reporting on socio-political change in the Arab uprisings may have been overstated (Reuter & Szakonyi, 2015; Wojcieszak & Smith, 2013; Lynch, 2011; Wojcieszak et al., 2012).

Starting off from the belief that ICT holds great promise for enabling development as ICT4D proponents contend, and for increasing the participation of citizens in governance, many researchers have over the last two decades sought to establish the causal relationships between use of digital technologies and participation. In more recent times, studies have investigated whether use of one or the other media increases the proclivity of individuals to participate in civic and political processes. Such research, including that conducted earlier on the popularity of television (for example Cummings et al., 2002), and what was conducted more recently on the internet and social media (Bachmann et al., 2010; Friedl & Vercic 2011; Räsänen, 2008; Tworzecki & Semetko, 2010; Cullen & Sommer, 2011; Bakker & de Vreese, 2011), mostly concluded that there was a correlation between media use and the likelihood for political participation.

Zúñiga et al. (2012) noted, for instance, that media use related to information acquisition such as TV news and community building (such as online communities) was positively associated with civic participation. On the other hand, use related to entertainment (such as reality shows and online movies) negatively impacted on participation (ibid). Meanwhile, in
drawing the link between media use and participation, Cullen and Sommer (2011) pointed to the role of ICT as a communications channel and an enabler of online networking; while Gustafsson (2012) identified the proliferating social networking sites as a great source for political news and a way of influencing contacts for politically-inclined individuals. However, contemporary research is not wholly in agreement about the effects of using social media on participation nor does it always succinctly explain the link between use of particular media and the resulting likelihood for participation.

This thesis therefore investigates the understudied issue of ICT use in authoritarian, developing country contexts, taking the east African country Uganda as a case study. I had conducted previous research on eParticipation in Uganda (Wakabi, 2010), a country with a growing number of ICT users ranged against a seeming growing democracy deficit. Uganda also presented a good study case since I know it fairly well. Being Ugandan and resident in the country made it easy for me to identify and contextualise issues, as well as to administer the research. There is little research on eGovernment in Africa (Dombeu et al., 2015), and limited empirical evidence on the use of ICT in governance in East Africa, despite growing interest and investment in this area (Sika, 2015). Moreover, throughout Sub-Saharan Africa, including in Uganda, there are few examples of direct political action facilitated by mobile devices and networks (Hellström, 2015). Gagliardone et al. (2015), who reviewed literature on ICT and participation in Africa, concluded that although there was much excitement and optimism about the role of ICT in governance, the evidence of actual impact was thin.

Moreover, even in western countries, eParticipation is not a great success. Common challenges include digital inequalities in the networked society (Effing et al., 2011; Hacker et al., 2009), limited deliberation and politicians’ reluctance to embrace new possibilities enabled by eParticipation (Sæbø, 2011; Freschi et al., 2009), and a lack of interest in policy issues and low levels of trust in politicians and in eParticipation endeavours (Lee et al., 2011; Scherer & Wimmer, 2014). In addition, the challenges and opportunities for eParticipation involving non-institutional actors in western countries have not been well studied (Susha & Grönlund, 2012).

This thesis focuses on “bottom-up” participation, primarily citizen-to-citizen interactions via digital technologies. Bottom-up participation in initiatives and processes is initiated by civil society such as non-government organisations or groups of citizens with the aim to influence politics in some way. This is in contrast to the top-down participation that is driven by the
government. From a democracy perspective, bottom-up participation is acknowledged as a precondition for democracy, but, increasingly, it is also manifesting as a form of participation. With the proliferation of interactive, user-driven and collaborative web-based platforms supporting eParticipation, citizens have the potential to become the main actors of eParticipation activities, which necessitates a shift of research focus from government to citizens and other stakeholders (Medaglia, 2011).

In authoritarian countries, citizens tend to have scarce connections to their government and mostly interact with other citizens on civic and political matters. In Uganda, free expression is constricted offline and online, there are widespread fears of monitoring citizens’ online actions (Amnesty International, 2013; CIPESA, 2013) plus fear of reprisals for criticising the government (Freedom House, 2015). President Yoweri Museveni, who captured power via a guerrilla war, has led Uganda for 30 years, and in February 2016 got re-elected for another five-year term in a heavily criticised poll. Museveni’s main challenger was arrested several times during the election week and was placed under indefinite house arrest thereafter (Gaffey, 2016; Chullo, 2016; Mutiga, 2016; Baguma, 2016). Only 37% of Uganda’s population of 37.5 million people have access to the internet, with high access costs, low literacy levels, and poor infrastructure spread hampering greater access. These factors affect the drivers of eParticipation between the oft-studied developed democracies and countries like Uganda.

In the context of this thesis, activities that constitute eParticipation include joining online networks, discussing social and political issues, eActivism, online decision making, citizen education, eCampaigning, and ePetitioning, and derive primarily from models by Tambouris et al. (2007) and Sæbø et al. (2008). The participation is both in organised politics (such as political groups) and in informal citizen-driven forms of participation, including citizen-to-citizen interactions on political issues. The thesis takes primary interest in ordinary Internet users, although some of the studies that make up the thesis also involved political and civil society activists. This is in recognition of the fact that different participation processes will be driven by different motivations.

The overarching research question for the thesis is: How can social media contribute to increased political participation in an authoritarian state? This question is explored through four inter-linked studies that were published in four papers, each addressing a separate sub-question. The sub-questions are:
1. What is the connection between the way individuals participate online and offline in authoritarian countries?
2. What factors are important predictors of online participation among individuals who use Facebook in an authoritarian state?
3. What is the difference between the way individuals engage online with other citizens and with political leaders, and what are the key impediments to greater citizens’ eParticipation?
4. How has ICT affected citizens’ capability to participate in social accountability, and what are the success factors and key challenges to successful citizens’ monitoring of quality of public services via ICT?

The four sub-questions progressively contribute to generating evidence on challenges to eParticipation and how social media can contribute to increased political participation in an authoritarian country. The first study, which was based on a questionnaire administered face-to-face to 116 individuals, investigated the connection between the way individuals participate online and offline. Through focus group discussions involving 56 Ugandans, the second study examined how the use of Facebook affects the participative behaviours of individuals active in political and interest organisations and those not active in organised politics. I then designed a third study involving a questionnaire-based survey with 322 individuals, to try and understand the differences between the ways ordinary citizens engaged online with other citizens and with political leaders, as well as the primary impediments to greater citizens’ eParticipation. The last study was conducted to establish whether, in less political processes such as monitoring the quality of public services, more citizens were e-participating. It was conducted through focus group discussions involving 41 individuals, as well as 16 key informant interviews.

The shortage of research on eParticipation in Africa and in authoritarian countries, and in Uganda particularly, was a practical motivation for this thesis. Conducting the research in Uganda, particularly establishing factors that can motivate greater eParticipation, could potentially help address the democracy deficit in the country, which to me as a Ugandan citizen presented a strong personal incentive. But with literature replete with cases of failure of eParticipation initiatives, including in countries with high ICT access rates and long-established democratic traditions, it was crucial to examine a theory commonly used to explain individuals’ participation behav-
iour, and for this I found Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) suitable. Articulated by Verba et al. (1995), the CVM holds that individuals find the costs of participating low enough and the benefits high enough, when they are equipped with resources of time, money, and civic skills, and have a sense of psychological engagement with politics and current events. The hope was that this theory could be leveraged to help and raise the level of citizens' participation in Uganda.

Building on the constituents of the Information System (IS) artefact as identified by Lee et al. (2015), namely the technology, information and social artefacts, the thesis moves a step forward in conceptualising and theorising the IS artefact by identifying the political artefact of the IS. The thesis contributes to the IS artefact discourse by illuminating the political artefact in SNS when used for eParticipation. It shows how SNS-for-participation contain the various constitutive aspects of the IS, and how these various artefacts need to be aligned for eParticipation to work. This thesis studies social networking sites as IS artefacts, including individuals’ motivation for using them, how their technological features enable participation, the results of their use. The thesis also studies the nature of information and discussions enabled by social media (which constitute the information artefact).

The thesis found that the postulations of the CVM were not entirely applicable in an authoritarian context. For Ugandan citizens with limited interest in politics, living under an authoritarian regime where critical opinion can attract reprisals, having access to the internet and civic knowledge rarely translate into eParticipation. Moreover, in an environment where citizens have no trust in their anonymity and security being assured by the channels of participation, they will be deterred from participating even if they wanted to vent their political frustrations. In these circumstances, the CVM is insufficient to explain motivation for participation by Ugandans. I explore this issue in section 7.4, and make suggestions of what is lacking in the CVM to make it more applicable to explaining political participation in authoritarian countries. This represents another contribution of my thesis to theory. I propose ways to facilitate greater eParticipation in socio-political contexts such as Uganda, in spite of the enormous challenges to online participation. These proposals may be useful also for motivating eParticipation by citizens and duty bearers in other countries with political and technological contexts similar to Uganda, such as low levels of ICT literacy and access, high democracy deficit, and citizens’ mistrust in safety and efficacy of eParticipation.
1.1. Structure of the Thesis
The next chapters elucidate various elements of the thesis that have been introduced by Chapter 1. In chapter 2, I present the research design, data collection and data analysis methods. In chapter 3, I explain the study context, including a background to ICT use and governance in Uganda, an exploration of what defines authoritarian regimes, and a review of the use of ICT in authoritarian countries. In Chapter 4, I present the theoretical foundations of the thesis (the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM), the IS artefact theory and eParticipation theory) and how I use these in my thesis. Chapter 5 summarises the papers that form the basis of the thesis, including the research questions and key findings of each paper, and the logical flow from one paper to another. Chapter 6 summarises how the key findings relate to the research questions, study context, and theory. Chapter 7 analyses the implications of the key findings for practice and theory. Chapter 8 is a roundup of the thesis that states my contribution to theory and practice and identifies future research needs.
2. Research Design

Epistemologically, the thesis takes an interpretive stance. Method-wise, the thesis combines qualitative and quantitative research approaches. As was noted by Orlikowski and Baroudi (2001), interpretive studies aim not to construct an objective reality but to describe social and shared understandings around the phenomenon under study. Additionally, interpretive research does not predefine dependent and independent variables, but focuses on the full complexity of human sense-making as the situation emerges (Kaplan and Maxwell, 1994). This thesis explores social networking sites (SNS) as Information Systems (IS) artefacts, including individuals’ motivation for using them and the benefits of their use in participation. The assertions by Orlikowski and Baroudi (2001) and Kaplan and Maxwell (1994) hence hold true to the participation phenomenon that is the focus of this thesis. They are relevant to understanding how dynamics such as use of SNS and the state’s reaction to critical citizen organising affect the nature of participation. Interpretive researchers need to consciously adopt a critical and reflective stance in relation to the role that Information Technology plays in maintaining social order and social relations (Doolin, 1998). The research methods used in interpretive studies are therefore designed to help researchers understand people and the social and cultural context within which they live (Myers, 2009). Moreover, interpretive case studies examine a phenomenon in a natural setting, employing multiple methods of data collection to gather information from one or a few entities such as people, groups, or organisations (Benbasat et al., 1987).

Elliott (2000) has suggested that the kind of issues which interpretive research asks include: “Why does the phenomenon come about?” “How does it unfold over time?” “What changes led to what other changes?” Looking through the questions I posed via questionnaires and focus group discussion guides, it is evident that they elicited answers amenable to interpretive research. These included: How do people get to use SNS? What motivates their use of SNS in political participation? What factors can lead to changes in the way citizens participate online, i.e. what needs to happen to motivate citizens’ participation in spite of the challenges currently hampering eParticipation? According to Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991), interpretive studies assume that people create and associate their own subjective and intersubjective meanings as they interact with the world around them. Interpretive researchers therefore attempt to understand phenomena through accessing the meanings participants assign to them. My research entailed lots
of interviews that derived a lot of qualitative responses. Moreover, by tri-
angulating I aimed to receive the perspectives of several citizens on the issues
I was studying (SNS use and eParticipation), and I then had to make sense
of the phenomenon under study from the meanings assigned to these issues
by the study participants.

The thesis does not treat ICT deterministically. Rather, it considers that
ICT affects and is affected by the socio-political context. Various factors,
including citizens and political actors, affect the way SNS is used, and social
media also can affect how people associate or participate. In the studies that
constitute this thesis, my intention was to generate meaning and to interpret
the dynamics around the interactions of citizens and government via SNS,
and to understand how the various facets of SNS as an IS artefact need to
be aligned in order for eParticipation to work. As advanced by Bimber
(2003), socio-technical developments do not determine political outcomes,
but simply alter the matrix of opportunities and costs associated with polit-
cical intermediation, mobilisation, and the organisation of politics. From the
IS discipline, scholars acknowledge that technology should not be consid-
ered deterministic. Walsham (1993) pointed to a key aim of interpretive IS
studies being an attempt to understand the context of the IS and the process
whereby the IS influences and is influenced by the context. Two decades,
later Lee et al. (2015) described technology as enabling, interacting with
and transforming other constituents of the information system so as to solve
a problem or achieve a goal for individuals or communities.

This research was conducted via two key methods: two personal inter-
view surveys involving a total of 438 individuals in ten Ugandan towns, and
ten focus group discussions involving 97 individuals. The research questions
for the thesis were informed by the theories employed by the research – the
CVM, the IS artefact perspective and eParticipation theory. I explore more
about the theoretical foundations of the thesis in Chapter 4.

The choice of Uganda for the study was informed by various reasons: I
had conducted previous research on eParticipation in the country, a com-
parative assessment of individuals’ online and offline participative behav-
iours, which found that predictors of online engagement did not necessarily
apply in the real world (Wakabi, 2010). Uganda also presented a good study
case since I know it fairly well, being Ugandan and resident in the country.
This made it easy for me to identify and contextualise issues, as well as to
administer the research. Uganda was also suitable since it has a growing
number of ICT users ranged against a democracy deficit that sees freedom
of expression restricted both offline and online.
There are various benefits of adopting a mixed methods approach, as I did in this thesis. This triangulation strategy is often used in descriptive and interpretive research, by gathering data through multiple methods (Elliott & Timulak, 2005). Through the mixed methods approach, the researcher combines elements of qualitative and quantitative research for purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration (Johnson et al., 2007). This approach enables the researcher to validate findings by examining the same phenomenon in different ways (Creswell et al., 2011) and yield a richer and more balanced picture of the phenomenon (Elliott & Timulak, 2005), which together help the researcher to understand the findings better. The mixed methods employed allowed for efficient and exhaustive collection of information, and for analysis of this information to reach compelling results. Based on the methodology adopted, the research engaged requisite numbers of participants and used detailed, clear questioning. In addition, the choice of participants and the ways in which data was collected and analysed, were all rigorous and scientific, and helped this thesis to generate reliable empirical evidence.

2.1 Research Questions
In order to understand the connection between the ways in which individuals participate online and offline, and to gain an understanding of the nature of eParticipation among citizens, this thesis pursues one overarching research question: How can social media contribute to increased political participation in an authoritarian state? This question is explored through four inter-linked studies that were published in four papers, each of which addressed a separate sub-question. The sub-questions are:

- What is the connection between the way individuals participate online and offline in authoritarian countries?
- What factors are important predictors of online participation among individuals who use Facebook in an authoritarian state?
- What is the difference between the way individuals engage online with other citizens and with political leaders, and what are the key impediments to greater citizens’ eParticipation?
• How has ICT changed citizens’ capability to participate in social accountability, and what are the success factors and key challenges to successful citizens’ monitoring of quality of public services via ICT?

2.2 Questionnaire-Based Survey

Two questionnaires were designed. The first was administered face-to-face to 116 individuals and fed into Paper 1. The second was administered to 322 internet users in nine districts of Uganda – Lira, Gulu, Iganga, Mayuge, Mbale, Mpigi, Masaka, Kabarole and Kasese. This questionnaire consisted of 20 questions. It fed into paper 3. While the questionnaires were similar, the second one explored additional questions, notably on how ordinary citizens engaged online with other citizens on the one hand, and with political leaders on the other hand. Table 1 shows the methods employed in each of the four papers.

Table 1: Research methods used in the various papers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>Research Design</th>
<th></th>
<th>Focus Group Discussions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Physical Interviews</td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 3</td>
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<td>×</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Paper 4</td>
<td>×</td>
<td>×</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2.1 Questionnaire Design

The design of the questionnaires and the FGD guides was informed by the theories underpinning this thesis. The issues I asked about were those which the theories I applied had identified as relevant to understanding and motivating participation. For instance, with regard to the CVM, I asked about the applicability of the factors advanced by this theory as motivators of participation. In FGDs and personal interviews, I asked how resources (e.g.
time, money, communication and organisational skills; psychological engagement with politics; and recruitment by a friend or associate) motivated participation. As explain in chapter 6, for each study the questions in the questionnaire or other research instruments aimed to ultimately provide answers to the key question addressed by the individual studies. For paper 1, the questions were informed by eParticipation theory. That initial study, as explained in section 5.1, laid the foundation for the thesis, as it established that common drivers of eParticipation, such as low cost, security, and anonymity, are hard to transplant into the offline world for citizens living in authoritarian countries.

Based on eParticipation theory, including a review of participation models and the various activities they entail, the IS artefact theory, and the elements the CVM advances in explaining the motivation for participation, respondents were asked questions relating to online participation and the frequency of engagement in those activities. They were asked about participative activities and in which sphere (offline or online) they were more likely to engage, and the reasons for their preference. The questionnaire also explored the factors that inform similarities and differences in offline and online participation among the same individuals. Questions included: In which sphere (offline or online) are you more likely to engage in each of the following activities, and why? How often do you engage in each of these activities online? The activities included looking for political information on the web, visiting a political organisation’s website, discussing politics in a chat group, joining an email discussion about politics, downloading documents (manifestos, politicians speeches) from a political organisation’s website, sending an email to a politician or political organisation, signing an online petition, donating funds online to a political cause, volunteering online to help with a political cause, and joining a political organisation online. There were also questions on the perceived usefulness of ICT for monitoring quality of public services delivery and whether respondents used ICT to monitor or report on government performance. Other questions related to the ways and frequency with which respondents used ICT to engage with other citizens, and with duty bearers, on public affairs.

Respondents were asked about their information sharing practices and they rated the level of their knowledge and proficiency in using a range of ICT tools and services, namely search engines such as Google, sharing documents and photos (as attachments), contributing to online discussion groups, use of social media (Twitter, Facebook etc.), SMS on cell phone,
blogging, downloading files (documents and media), and video conferencing (Skype, Google Plus, etc.). In order to understand how the internet was affecting individuals’ participation, we asked, “How, if at all, is the internet encouraging your participation in the political affairs of your country?” Hindrances to greater eParticipation were explored, through questions such as: “What factors facilitate or constrain your use of ICT for civic participation/democracy?”; “Do you find it easier to express yourself more frankly offline or online? If so, why?”; and “What makes you decide whether to be active or silent in online/ Facebook political groups to which you are a member?”

### 2.2.2 Interviews

Data were collected through face-to-face interviews based on two questionnaires. (See annex 1 and annex 3 for the questionnaires). The study for paper 1 involved 116 individuals, while the one for paper 3 involved 322 individuals. A key informant interview guide was used for the 16 interviews that complemented the focus group discussions for paper 4. Because internet access, incomes, and education levels are much higher in the capital than elsewhere in Uganda, it was deemed necessary to include various countryside districts. Table 2 below shows the number of respondents per study area.

![Table 2: Survey respondents per study](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Paper</th>
<th>No. of survey respondents</th>
<th>Scope</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper 1</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>3 towns – Kampala, Gulu and Kasese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 3</td>
<td>322</td>
<td>9 districts - Lira, Gulu, Iganga, Mayuge, Mbale, Mpigi, Masaka, Kabarole and Kasese.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper 4</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9 districts - Lira, Kampala, Kabarole</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Face-to-face interviews were necessary to create trust and elicit good responses from respondents who may not have been sure of who was interviewing them if the interviews were to be conducted online via say Survey Monkey, email, or Skype. Interviewer-administered questionnaires have the
advantage that unclear questions can be clarified to the respondent and open-ended questions can be used to collect a range of possible responses (Williams, 2003). Additionally, the interviewer can ensure that all the questions are answered by the respondent. During the research, I found out that conducting the survey via face-to-face interviews was very fruitful as I clarified questions and issues to respondents, thereby ensuring comprehensive responses that may have not have been forthcoming if the interviews were conducted online, particularly given the sensitivity of some of the issues that I was researching.

2.2.3 Selection of Respondents
All respondents in the surveys were internet users. They included citizens who may or may not be members of online political groups. An initial group of respondents was identified through searches on eight Ugandan groups on Facebook managed by political organisations and activist groups. The groups were identified through searches on the social network based on keywords, including names of political parties, party leaders, and national issues in the governance debate. Groups selected included those run by the three political parties and party leaders that received most votes in the 2011 elections. These are the National Resistance Movement, the Forum for Democratic Change, and the Democratic Party. Besides the political parties, I also chose the activist groups Save Mabira Campaign (a lobby group against a government plan to convert a tropical rainforest into a sugar plantation); and ‘31 Million Bafuruki’ (an activist group opposed to government proposals to restrict political positions in a certain region to the area’s “natives”) who had been very active on Facebook and whose campaigns also received national offline prominence. After identifying members of these groups based in the districts of interest, snowball sampling was used to recruit additional respondents. Snowball sampling uses a small pool of initial informants to nominate other participants who meet the eligibility criteria for a study. Also known as chain referral sampling, snowball sampling is a useful way to pursue the goals of purposive sampling in situations where there are no lists or other obvious sources for locating members of the population of interest, but it requires that the participants are likely to know others who share the characteristics that make them eligible for inclusion in the study (Morgan, 2008). Some additional internet users in the nine focus districts were conveniently sampled from around internet access centres, notably internet cafes.
2.3 Focus Group Discussions

The aim of the focus groups discussions (FGD) was to complement the quantitative data. The quantitative data provided big picture information on usage of technology and some underlying factors around technology and participation. However, in-depth explanations of individuals’ motivations and behaviour could not be provided by the data and that is how the focus groups came in usefully. The focus groups discussed issues similar to those covered by the survey, but the discussions particularly aimed to elicit explanations and validation to the results from the survey data. Specifically, and moving farther than the survey, the discussions dwelt at length on motivations for using SNS for particular functions, the effects of social network use on participation and the drivers and barriers to eParticipation in an authoritarian context. Indeed, as Boateng (2012) has noted, while focus groups may not on their own be the best tool for eliciting the best qualitative data, they can be gainfully used jointly with other methodologies in a form of triangulation or mixed methodological approach for more quality data.

Ten FGDs involving 97 individuals were conducted. All FGDs for Paper 2 were held in Kampala. For Paper 2, two focus groups were held for members of political parties, two for members of interest groups, and two for those neither active in political parties nor in interest groups. All respondents were users of social networks, since the study was about the effect of the use of SNS – particularly Facebook - on the participation behaviour of its users. For Paper 4, four FGDs involved ordinary citizens, the media, and members of rural accountability committees also known as Voluntary Social Accountability Committees (VSACs). These focus groups were conducted in Kampala, Lira, and Kabarole districts. On average, each of them lasted 90 minutes. (See annex 2 and annex 4 for the FGD guides). For paper 2, the respondents were chosen through various methods: Telephone and email contact with political parties and interest groups; contact with participants through their Facebook accounts; and contact with university students. There was then snowball sampling with the contacts who had been identified through these avenues.

As noted by Gustafsson (2012), focus groups are useful when the purpose is not to generalise but to study such motives, experiences, and thought processes of individuals as are not obtainable through extensive methods like surveys. Focus groups can also give more in-depth information than individual interviews because the group starts discussing among themselves and then participants remember more – although it is true that sometimes the FGDs run the risk of group-think. The main advantage of FGDs involves
how group interactions can reveal and highlight the participants’ perceptions, attitudes, thinking, and framework of understanding, and in this way the discussions can allow for collection of a greater variety of information than other qualitative methods of data collection (Kitzinger, 1994; Gronkjær et al., 2011). Discussions at the FGDs started with general issues of use of social networking sites, then zeroed in on Facebook and its use for political participation. Starting off with a wider discussion of SNS use and of general use of social networks set the ground for more focussed thinking on how FGD respondents used Facebook for participation. When some FGD participants spoke about the various uses of SNS and the constraints to use, it sparked reflection among the attendees, who provided supportive positions and also counter-arguments, which helped me to collect nuanced responses that may not have been possible had I conducted individual interviews.

Unlike focus groups, in-depth interviews are often more suitable for respondents to actually show their profile rather than build a reconstruction of their behaviour. But the FGDs allow for respondents to react to other participants’ stories and comparing them to their own experiences (Hundley & Shyles, 2010). The FGDs also enabled for any unclear questions to be clarified and to receive responses to most of the questions posed. Some of the issues which emerged during the interview process were used to steer the discussions. However, in a society where citizens fear that expressing certain political opinions could attract reprisals, FGDs can be problematic. The exploration of SNS use corresponds to an examination of a social behaviour, an attribute to which individuals tend to provide a socially positive image. However, I created trust among respondents, by assuring them of the anonymity of their contributions. This was also enabled because the discussions were conducted face-to-face (rather than through online or through phone), and because many respondents were recruited through referrals. Keeping the groups homogeneous (the politically inactive had their own FGDs as did activists and political party members) also aided in creating a conducive atmosphere for frank and honest discussions.

An FGD guide was developed, as was an interview guide primarily for implementers of three non-government projects that use ICT to increase citizens’ participation in governance, notably quality of public services monitoring. These implementers included top decision makers such as Executive Directors, administrators such as Project Officers and Communication Officers. Respondents were asked about their information sharing practices and the main ICT tools and services they used. In order to understand how
SNS was affecting individuals’ participation habits, I asked, “How is the use of SNS encouraging your participation in the political affairs of your country?” Hindrances to greater eParticipation were explored, through questions such as: “What factors facilitate or constrain your use of ICT for political participation?”; and “Are you free to express your political views freely on social media?” Other questions included: How does Facebook and other social media enable political participation? Do the ties you make on social media, and the activities and conversations you make on Facebook, stimulate participation? What makes you decide whether to be active or silent in online political Facebook groups in which you are a member? What are the effects of using Facebook on your political knowledge, and does any resulting increase in your political knowledge raise your level of eParticipation? The importance of time, money, skills; interest, knowledge, efficiency as motivations for participation was also explored.

2.4 Literature review

I conducted an extensive literature review centred on issues around eGovernance, eParticipation, the governance context in Uganda, and use of digital communications in authoritarian countries. Concepts, rather than authors, determine the organising framework of my review as the literature review was concept-centric (Webster & Watson, 2002). The review presented in the thesis is analytical - presenting the literature that touts the benefits of eParticipation but also questioning these claims and some of the evidence provided in the literature. The review also analyses the numerous factors ranged against eParticipation, specifically in authoritarian and developing countries. The review is alive to the paucity of literature on eParticipation in Africa and the need for further studies in this area. An intention of the literature review was to generate an understanding of the current debates and issues on the themes of interest to the thesis. Establishing current knowledge and gaps in relation to my research questions was a key focus of the review.

I reviewed literature from peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed journals, as well as grey literature. My focus was on literature on what constitutes eParticipation so as to establish the range of activities that are generally understood as being part of eParticipation. Then, I explored the growing importance of online participation. Findings in the literature on what constitutes eParticipation then formed the basis for the review of literature on
how ICT, notably SNS, use affects citizens’ proclivity to participate, and on eParticipation in authoritarian countries.

In helping to establish the overall ideas in eParticipation and the challenges in the field, the literature review provided a backdrop for the research questions. I conducted searches on web resources including Google Scholar, and academic databases such as JSTOR, the International Bibliography of the Social Sciences (IBSS), Lecture Notes in Computer Science, and RefWorks, as well as in proceedings of eParticipation conferences and other academic conferences on related issues. These included: International Federation for Information Processing's Electronic Government (EGOV), The International Conference for e-Democracy and Open Government (CEDEM), International Conference on Theory and Practice of Electronic Governance (ICEGOV), Information, Science and Technology (IST-Africa), and Electronic Participation (ePart).

2.5 Data Analysis

Just as I used different methods to collect the data, it followed that the data analysis was multi-pronged. Yin (1989) noted that data analysis consists of a number of stages, i.e. examining, categorising and tabulating or otherwise recombining the evidence, in order to address the initial goal of a study. As part of making sense of the huge amount of information generated by the FGDs, I did data grouping and analysis based on respondents’ answers question by question. I then studied groups of answers to find common threads that contributed to answering the research questions. After establishing the key responses to each question, I then fed these responses to specific issues in a bid to build answers to the research questions. I iterated this process of reading the transcripts, seeking information that could be grouped together under a theme (both supportive and divergent information), and that helped to answer my research questions. In this process, I also looked out for trends and relationships between different sets of responses, issues, and themes. So, as an example, questions answered in the second question of the FGD guide could show a relationship to responses in the fifth question. In this process, I also aimed to identify similarities and differences between respondents’ views - including across categories, for instance ordinary citizens vs. activists or social accountability monitors vs. ordinary citizens. I included illustrative quotations in building the emerging themes. During the discussions, I took notes on who was talking, noting what appeared to be
emerging issues, marking questions for follow up. During the analysis process, these notes proved a valuable guide, offering pointers to issues and standpoints that were essential to answering the research questions.

Meanwhile, quantitative responses to the survey questions were coded in order to give statistical descriptions of the different data sets representing the various responses given. Statistical measures such as mean or average value, median and frequencies (percentiles of respondents that fell into particular categories), joint distributions and graphical representations, were done using Microsoft Excel and then imported into Microsoft Word. The measures and graphical representations are described by the scale categories used in the questionnaires and not the coding ID numbers. For instance, the question about where respondents accessed the internet from was coded and represented as follows (with the bold numbers in brackets representing the code):

From where do you mostly access the Internet?
- a) Home [1]
- b) Work [2]
- c) Café [3]
- d) Community Centre [4]
- e) Other (please specify) [5]

The qualitative responses were analysed and interpreted with a focus on what was specific to the question, unique to the respondent or deviant from the other responses received for the same question. The subjective descriptions which were given by respondents in the open-ended questions gave me a deeper contextual understanding of the statistical data generated from quantitative responses. Just like quantitative data, qualitative data too can be coded (Williams, 2003; InSites, 2007). But because I had very few qualitative questions to analyse, I did not have a need for a systematic coding of these responses. Instead, the analysis of qualitative data involved reading through the filled in questionnaires to establish themes and categories between the responses given on the various questionnaires. These themes helped the grouping and analysis of the results. As an example, where I asked about the reasons why respondents may find it easier to express themselves online or offline, I was able to group the reasons advanced in order of how many respondents mentioned what particular reason. This way, it was possible to tell what the predominant reasons were for individuals who preferred to frankly express themselves in one sphere and not in another.
For papers 1 and 3, I conducted Exploratory Data Analysis or EDA (Syl-
via & Murphy, 2014), viewing the data files before completing the collect-
ing and entering of all the data so as to get an idea of the nature of responses
and the data that the completed survey instruments contained. In effect, as-
psects of analysing the data from the surveys started early in the process of
gathering the data, as I started taking notes and categorising some of the
emerging themes that were reflective of the key lines of inquiry of my re-
search. As has been noted (SSC, 2001), this phase can allow the form of
analysis to be tried out and agreed, developing analysis plans in
parallel with the final data collection, data entry and checking. Pur-
poseful EDA, or preliminary analysis, thus allows the subsequent stage of
deriving the main findings to be relatively quick and well organised, and it
enables the researcher to see limitations in contingent questions, which then
shows the researcher what issues can be analysed using the data and which
ones cannot (ibid). Ultimately, I analysed contingency questions, but there
was also some analysis I could not do because the data had limitations.

In reading the qualitative responses, I aimed to find relationships, expla-
nations, and understandings of what the data was saying. This also served
as a validation exercise, helping me to explain the data but also to check for
data consistence and quality. Subsequently, I conducted response categori-
sation and was then able to compare responses, for instance of registered
political party members and non-registered members, or of young and older
respondents. I included quotes of respondents to illustrate and emphasise
certain viewpoints. This exercise helped me to flesh out the main findings
and supporting narratives, as well as some recommendations. These were
then backed up by tables and graphs to provide visual clarity and compar-
ison in answering the research questions.

With regard to the focus groups, I counted the frequency of mention of
some points by different respondents but this was not the primary basis of
the analysis. In re-reading transcripts and listening to the recordings mul-
tiple times, my key interest was to understand common emerging issues that
were essential to answering my research questions. As Krueger (1997) has
noted, the strength of focus group research is not based on counting, but on
understanding the discussion. This, nonetheless, is not to say I discounted
the value of counting in order to gauge how much support particular argu-
ments and issues had in the discussions. For instance, there were some focus
group discussion guide questions which virtually all respondents spoke
about. For these questions, it was easy for me to establish what proportion
of participants had what view on an issue. This was mostly applicable to
yes-no questions and to those that explicitly required respondents to list definite items, such as the SNS they used most.

### 2.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were primarily to protect the anonymity of respondents and to guard against harm being indirectly caused to them. The research was conducted in accordance with the recommended practices on ethics in research, including the Uganda National Guidelines for Research involving Humans as Research Participants (UNCST, 2014), the Swedish ethical guidelines (Vetenskapsrådet, 2014) and the codes of ethics published by the International Sociological Association. The ethical considerations rested on the common principles of:

1. **Autonomy:** research participants’ values and decisions should be respected and those who are dependent or vulnerable be afforded security against harm or abuse;
2. **Beneficence:** the research will avoid harming participants and maximise benefits;
3. **Non-maleficence:** researchers will not deliberately inflict harm, or evil, on research participants; and,
4. **Justice:** all people should be treated equally.

I ensured the privacy of participants, confidentiality of their participation, and the private information they supplied, during and after the research. All personal data collected on the respondents’ preferences and habits was treated confidentially. The data was anonymised to make it impossible to trace back to the individuals who participated in the research. Personal questions asked of respondents included: gender; age; average income; education levels attained; awareness of ICT; participative habits; knowledge, attitudes and practices regarding ICT and participation; and membership to political parties and citizen groups. Others included frequency of participation in political affairs and means of participation; use of ICT in participation; views on whether ICT can enhance democracy; information needs and how they are met; frequency of using ICT for political activities, and spending on ICT. In publishing the research findings, I de-personalised all information, by not publishing details such as the names, ages, incomes, and political views of interviewees. The ethical considera-
tions also included informed consent by all those who took part in the research. Before any participant took part, the methodology of the research and any anticipated effects were communicated and explained, and then the consent of the prospective participant was sought.

2.7 Limitations
This research has its limitations, including a fairly small number of respondents, which make it not necessarily representative of the overall situation of all ICT users in Uganda. Moreover, these results are not generalizable to the Ugandan population. Most respondents in this study were urban-based, educated and averagely high-income earners. It was nonetheless important to study matters of internet use in an authoritarian context among “wired” Ugandans, who may be opinion leaders in their communities and may be consequential for the future of the country. In Egypt and Tunisia during the Arab Spring, the young, urban and educated actively used Facebook, Twitter, blogs and YouTube to criticise and put pressure on their governments.
3. Study Context

In the first part of this chapter, I review the state of ICT use and of governance in Uganda. Various demographic and socio-economic indicators are provided, plus a review of the state of democracy and of the factors affecting how citizens’ use of ICT for political participation. In the second part of the chapter, I offer definitions and characteristics of authoritarian regimes and explain why I consider Uganda’s to be an authoritarian regime. This leads to presentation of a literature review on the link between use of social media and participation in authoritarian regimes. Finally, I present literature on eParticipation in Africa and on ICT-enabled social accountability.

3.1 Uganda: ICT Use and Governance

Uganda is a largely rural, landlocked country in central-eastern Africa, with an estimated 37 million inhabitants. Internet use stands at 37% of the population, relative to 20.7% for Africa, 66% in the Americas, 77.6% in Europe, 37% in Arab States, 36.9% in Asia and the Pacific (ITU, 2015). There are 64 mobile phone subscriptions for every 100 inhabitants, according to October 2015 figures from the Uganda Communications Commission, the industry regulator (UCC, 2015).

Facebook is the second most popularly visited website in Uganda after Google.com, while YouTube is the 3rd most visited site. Twitter and Wikipedia are 6th and 9th respectively (SimilarWeb, 2015). In Uganda, most users of Facebook are in the 18-24 years age group, followed by those in the 25-34 bracket. These two age groups account for 79% of Facebook users in Uganda, and these are mainly young and educated individuals who may be opinion leaders in their communities and may be consequential for the future of the country. Relative to other social media such as Instagram and Twitter, Facebook has a longer legacy in Uganda, which partly explains its popularity. Another factor that works in its favour is that subscribers on all the biggest telecom services providers – MTN, Africell, Airtel and Uganda Telecom – can use the so-called ‘Facebook Zero’ which allows a subscriber to access a text-only version of this social network, update their status, read and comment on posts, all for free. The user is only charged for downloading, streaming audio or video, or uploading pictures.

However, numerous challenges hamper the uptake of ICT in Uganda. Just about 18% of the population is connected to the national electricity grid while the literacy rate stands at 73%. The gross domestic product
(GDP) per capita is US$ 680, meaning Uganda is a least developed country according to the ranking by the United Nations. According to the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, up to 19.7% of the population lives below the poverty line. Just 16% of Uganda’s population lives in urban areas, and agriculture is the leading employer. Moreover, the use of most ICT, other than calling and receiving calls, is very much pegged to knowledge of the English language. Furthermore, as has been noted (Gilwald et al., 2010) various issues hinder African women, including Ugandan women, from using mobile phones and the internet. These factors include low levels of employment, lower education attainment compared to men, cultural norms and practices.

Since the liberalisation of the telecommunications sector in 1998, Uganda has registered notable growth with six mobile telecom operators and more than 30 Internet Service Providers (ISPs). Five telecom companies and the government jointly have 5,200 kms of fibre optic cables laid around the country. However, the Global Information Technology Report’s Networked Readiness Index for 2014 ranks Uganda number 110 out of 144 counties surveyed. Led by Finland, Singapore and Sweden, the highest ranked African country is Mauritius at 48 followed by South Africa at 70 (World Economic Forum, 2014). This report states that Uganda, like Tanzania and Zambia, continues to lag behind in developing ICT infrastructures, promoting higher ICT uptake, and benefitting from the economic yields associated with ICT. Regarding the level of competition for internet services, international long distance services, and mobile telephone services, Uganda is given the best possible mark, topping the scale alongside 59 other countries.

Meanwhile, the Global Competitiveness Report 2014–2015 ranked Uganda 122 out of 144 countries surveyed for economic productivity and prosperity. In terms of institutions, infrastructure, macroeconomic environment, health and primary education, it was ranked 126. The high cost of accessing internet in Uganda is partly because being landlocked, Uganda has to build or pay for backhauling costs through Kenya and Tanzania in order to access fibre cables at the Indian Ocean coast. See Table 3 for Uganda’s techno-demographic indicators.
Table 3: Techo-demographic indicators for Uganda

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Statistics (2015)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>37.5 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy rate</td>
<td>73% of population aged 15 and above</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet access</td>
<td>37% of the population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell phone access</td>
<td>64 phone connections per 100 inhabitants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of voice telecom operators</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gross domestic product per capita</td>
<td>US$ 680</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban population</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides the challenges in access to ICT, the country faces numerous governance challenges. For instance, Uganda is among the most corrupt countries in the world, ranking 142 out of 175 countries surveyed, according to the Global Corruption Perception Index (Transparency International, 2014). Public revenues are lost through numerous corrupt ways, including through the creation of “ghost” public servants and poorly monitored revenue sources and programs. This has created a need for novel ways of fighting corruption and monitoring public services delivery, such as through ICT (Asiimwe et al., 2013).

Freedom House’s Freedom on the Net Report 2015 report ranks Uganda as ‘partly free’, the same ranking it has had for at least the last four years. It states that Intimidation, threats of violence, and technical attacks against vulnerable groups and marginalised communities, particularly the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) community, are frequent online (Freedom House, 2015). Moreover, adds Freedom House, between June 2014 and May 2015, four individuals were arrested for their alleged involvement with Facebook pages known for critical commentary. In 2013, a cabinet minister announced that the country would establish a social media monitoring centre “to weed out those who use it to damage the government and people’s reputation” (New Vision, 2013). To-date, there is no confirmation that this centre exists. In June of 2015, President Museveni

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1 Data sourced from various sources, including the Uganda Bureau of Statistics, Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), the World Bank, and UNICEF
ordered security agencies to investigate and arrest persons he said were responsible for inciting ethnic hatred using social media. A week later, one individual was arrested for allegedly defaming the president, the first lady and other government officials through Facebook (Mpuga, 2015). He was charged with making offensive communications against Museveni in contravention of the Computer Misuse Act of 2011. Other individuals were questioned by security agencies over similar allegations.

The Uganda government has in the past charged a journalist over a report published online that alleged security agencies were complicit in a terrorist attack in the capital Kampala, and arrested some individuals over content published online (CIPESA, 2014). The Government also in 2011 ordered service providers to block access to SMS services, Facebook and Twitter in order to deny the opposition an opportunity to mobilise supporters for anti-government protests at the height of the Arab Spring. In the same year, the communications regulator ordered internet service providers to block SMS that contained 18 words it deemed could fan insecurity during election days. Ugandan opposition leaders and journalists are often harassed, arrested and charged in court for criticising government (Amnesty International, 2013; Freedom House, 2015, Gaffey, 2016; Chullo, 2016; Mutiga, 2016). In the last four years, numerous media houses have been forced to close for various periods of time because the government found their reporting to be counter to national security and the public interest. Fears persist of reprisals from the state to those who use ICT to criticise the government and these fears have led to self-censorship by media and ordinary citizens both offline and online (CIPESA, 2015; Privacy International, 2015).

3.2 Defining Authoritarian Regimes

Authoritarianism is one of the three main types of political systems or regimes - democracy and totalitarianism being the others (IESS, 2008). Authoritarian regimes are often characterised by censorship and repression (Brooker, 2008), as well as by limited pluralism and limited political participation. Features of authoritarianism include the existence of a single leader or small group of leaders with ultimate political authority, and belief in the supremacy of the authority of the state over all organisations in society and individuals' freedoms (Lauth, 2012). Other common markers of authoritarianism include highly concentrated and centralised power maintained by political repression and the exclusion of potential challengers; informal and
unregulated exercise of political power; a leadership that cannot be displaced by citizens’ free choice among competitors; the arbitrary deprivation of civil liberties, and little tolerance for meaningful opposition (Vestal, 1999).

While authoritarian regimes are often defined as regimes that do not meet certain criteria of democracy, there are different types of authoritarian regimes, with some being more stable than others, producing more economic growth or a better quality of government relative to other types of authoritarian regimes (Wahman et al., 2013). Authoritarian regimes can be monarchies, military regimes, or civilian-led regimes. In addition, authoritarian regimes can be multi-party, one-party or single party regimes. Moreover, whereas authoritarianism is often defined by failure to meet some democratic criteria, it has been argued that democracy and authoritarianism are not mutually exclusive (Gerschewski & Schmotz, 2011). As this argument goes, it is possible for democracies to possess strong authoritarian elements as both feature a form of submission to authority. In line with this line of argument, Wahman et al., 2013 noted that democracy is an institutional quality that is principally a matter of degree, meaning multiparty regimes can be placed on a democratic continuum where the label ‘authoritarian multiparty’ represents a cluster of regimes on the lower end of the democratic spectrum, while ‘democracies’ are multiparty regimes at the higher end.

Uganda manifests some elements of democracy, such as holding regular elections and nominal separation of powers. The country has been governed on a multi-party system since 2005, with 29 registered political parties – although the ruling party, in power since 1986, holds 69% of the seats in parliament. The elections are often fraught with irregularities such as rigging, violence, and voter bribery. In 2005, constitutional presidential term limits were removed to benefit the current leader, Yoweri Museveni, who has now been president for 30 years, having captured power in 1986 via a guerrilla war. The parliament, which is heavily dominated by the ruling party, unflinchingly does Museveni’s bidding and falls short on providing checks to the executive arm of government and on being a serious platform for deliberations. The country has sometimes been categorised as a hybrid democracy – namely, having elements of democracy and autocracy (Fails, 2011; EIU, 2014; Tripp, 2010).

But holding elections is in itself not an indication of democracy and, indeed, many authoritarian regimes hold elections but the electoral playing field is twisted to favour the party in power. As Donno (2013) has observed,
such electoral authoritarian regimes “allow multiple parties to compete in elections, but they do so under patently unfair conditions. Incumbents may place barriers on opposition parties' ability to campaign; generate a pro-government media bias; stack electoral commissions and courts with their supporters; or resort to stuffing ballot boxes and manipulating vote tabulations” (p. 704). Nonetheless, elections in authoritarian regimes can ultimately lead to a growth in emancipative values, with autocratic power appearing increasingly illegitimate in people’s eyes, a scenario Zavadskaia and Welzel (2015) believe can motivate subversive mass actions against authoritarian rule. These scholars also argue that incumbents are more likely to suffer electoral defeat when emancipative values have become more widespread.

Political space is restricted in Uganda and voices critical to government have been curtailed with the passing of contentious laws. For instance, the 2013 Public Order Management Act severely curtails freedom of expression and assembly, by giving police officers wide-ranging powers to break up meetings or to deny individuals permission to hold meetings (Human Rights Watch, 2013). In 2014, Uganda passed various regressive laws, including the Anti-Pornography Act and the Anti-Homosexuality Act (which a court later annulled). The two laws were criticised for undermining human rights (including the right to privacy and freedom of expression) in the online sphere. Ultimately, Uganda manifests a large democracy deficit, is characterised by low political participation and possesses the key features of an authoritarian regime, such as censorship and repression, a leader with ultimate political authority, limited pluralism, and use of state machinery to entrench the regime in power.

3.2.1 New Media Use in Authoritarian States

Increasingly, researchers are interested in investigating the role social media plays in political participation in authoritarian states. As this section shows, this role is not well understood, and some of the more recent research suggests that earlier scholars may have over-estimated the power and the role of SNS in social and political movements in authoritarian states. Scholarly interest in understanding the role social media plays in online political processes in authoritarian states has grown considerably following the so-called Arab Spring civilian uprisings in North Africa and Middle East countries, such as Tunisia, Syria, Libya, Yemen, and Egypt. The wave of demonstrations, uprisings, and riots started in Tunisia in December 2010 and spread
to other Arab states, and had by February of 2012 forced the rulers of Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen out of power (Simpson, 2014). The dominant storyline claims social media played a big role in these uprisings. Because they lower the cost of information acquisition, expose users to unsought political information, and increase the perceived reliability of that information, SNS have the potential to increase political awareness in non-democracies (Reuter & Szakonyi, 2015). Furthermore, SNS and satellite television together also offer powerful tools to protest organisers, reducing transaction costs for organisation and presenting rapid and powerful channels for disseminating messages and images (Lynch, 2011). In countries where there is censorship and citizens lack freedom of expression and action, digital communications offer an efficient alternative to counter the apparatus of the repressive state, playing “a strategic role when used for sharing information, seeking support, or tracking funding, or when involved in evaluating risks and advocating for a cause” (Allagui, 2014, p. 3).

Authoritarian regimes not only discourage individual participation by greatly increasing the punishments for dissent, “but also control the communicative infrastructure in ways that make it difficult for citizens to coordinate effective collective opposition or to express their dissent in the public sphere” (Tufekci & Wilson, 2012, p.3). In a study of ICT use in uprisings in Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, and Libya, Aman and Jayroe (2013) determined that digital communications helped protesters to move information around faster and more efficiently than state-controlled media, helping to organise the movements. The protestors were able to record and broadcast pictures and news messages with their mobile phones by uploading them for the world to see and hear. Howard et al. (2011) found evidence that during the Arab Spring, young, urban, relatively well educated individuals used Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube to put pressure on their governments, used blogs to criticise the governments in Egypt and Tunisia, and utilised Western media sites such as the BBC and CNN to spread "credible information" to their supporters.

Similarly, a study by Harlow (2012) found that in Guatemala, Facebook was used to mobilise an online movement that moved offline in demanding justice for the murder of prominent lawyer Rodrigo Rosenberg. An analysis of content on Facebook showed that the framing, topics, and functions of the online comments, prompted offline action by emphasising protests and calling on others to participate and spread the word. Rather than simply using Facebook as a forum for talking about justice or criticising the government, “users instead posted comments to mobilize an online and offline
movement, organize protests, showcase photos of protests, and actively show their support for the movement” (ibid, p.15).

Meanwhile, based on a survey of 1,200 participants in Egypt’s Tahrir Square protests, Tufekci and Wilson (2012) found that social media, in particular Facebook, provided new sources of information the regime could not easily control and were crucial in shaping how citizens made individual decisions about participating in protests. More than a quarter of the protestors sampled had first heard of the protests on Facebook and, in addition, a quarter used Facebook to disseminate pictures and videos they had produced. The study by Tufekci and Wilson (2012) found that Twitter, along with blogs, was used by protestors to communicate about the demonstrations as they unfolded. The studies by Aman and Jayroe (2013), Howard et al. (2011), Wojcieszak et al. (2013), Manrique and Mikail (2011), Harlow (2012), and Tufekci and Wilson (2012) show that SNS had diminished the repressive state’s control over the communicative infrastructure, thus enabling the organising and expression of dissenting opinions.

However, it has also been argued that the role of Twitter and Facebook in instigating and organisation, or reporting on socio-political change in uprisings in the Middle East and North Africa in 2011 was occasionally overstated (Wojcieszak & Smith, 2013). Based on a survey of 2,800 young, educated, and technologically savvy Iranians, these researchers studied protests that followed the June 2009 presidential elections in Iran and found that politics was not topping the agenda in the new media sphere; social issues were. They argued that the detected patterns "suggest that mobilisation via new media did not continue and/or was not substantial to begin with, and that our sample was more interested in using blogs, text messages, or Twitter to communicate about personal topics, new technologies and work-related affairs than politics" (p.16). Another study on Iran (Wojcieszak et al., 2012) found that although many citizens were using social media in the face of state control over traditional media, respondents expressed greater confidence in new media empowering them personally, rather than it making governmental officials more responsive. Neither the general population nor the Iranian youth sampled were particularly interested in using blogs, text messages, or Twitter to communicate political issues.

In spite of these findings on Iran, other researchers have found evidence of a pivotal role technology, particularly social media, played in mobilising citizens for social and political change. For instance, Harlow (2012) argued that without Facebook, it would not have been possible to mobilise the
50,000 protesters who turned up in Guatemala’s protests. However, Reuter and Szakonyi (2015) contended that there was no scholarly consensus about the effect of new media on politics in authoritarian regimes, because most scholars tended to view new media as a ‘black box’ and failed to distinguish between the different ways in which new media are used. They concluded that online social media usage only increases political awareness if the specific social network being used has been politicised to contain political information. Likewise, Lynch (2011) argued that while the Arab Spring protestors effectively used social media in their struggles, it was difficult to demonstrate rigorously that these new media directly caused any of the outcomes with which they have been associated.

There is also a discussion about the relative importance of ICT channels as compared to physical actions such as actually occupying city squares. Aouragh and Alexander (2011) suggest that the role of the internet should not be isolated from that of other media such as satellite broadcasting. Moreover, they argue that the value of Facebook as an organiser is lower where one can meet face-to-face, but “those physical meetings are also better for political planning and organising and building trust and conscripting sacrifice, what is generally referred to as ‘strong ties’” (p.7).

Moreover, while ICT tools are hailed for their democratising potential, they can be a double-edged sword, as dictators can also exploit them to their advantage. Lynch (2011) contends that ICT tools can strengthen the surveillance and repression capabilities of authoritarian states. Rød and Weidmann (2015) found that if the internet can be used as a tool to solidify autocratic survival by shaping public opinion and identifying dissenters, then more repressive regimes should be the most interested in providing online connection. They argued that since users of ICT are likely to be members of the urbanised, intellectual, and political elite, monitoring has immediate information benefits for autocratic leaders. Greitens (2013) observes that authoritarian states’ approaches to ICT fall into three categories: control (government seeks to limit or curtail citizens’ access to ICT such as through censorship and filtering); surveillance (the degree to which a regime uses ICT activity and data to monitor the population); and activism (how a regime seeks to actively shape online or social media content in its favour). Similarly, Bryant (2012) argued that while ICT tools can challenge authoritarian rule, the same technology can be used by savvy regimes through filtering and surveillance, censorship, infrastructure control, and propaganda to buttress their own interests.
Ethiopia is an example of a country that controls the development of new technologies nationally; “appropriating ICTs to support its ambitious nation-building project, while real or imagined enemies were prevented from developing uses that could challenge it” (Gagliardone, 2014, p.6). Perhaps more than any other country in Africa, Ethiopia regularly blocks websites, undertakes surveillance of websites and social media, and charges journalists over content published offline and online (CIPESA, 2014). However, Laverty (2012) argues that the digital methods of authoritarian regimes in Sub-Saharan Africa are not as well understood or studied as they are in places like Iran or China, but cautions that repression in the offline world will undoubtedly encroach on the digital one, which could result in more overall repression or instability in authoritarian countries. With the strong perception held by many users in Africa, Uganda more specifically, of ongoing monitoring of their online activity, doubts arise as to whether SNS use would raise political participation among citizens.

It appears much of the literature on this issue is based on small numbers of study participants. Also, many of the studies on authoritarian states tend to be largely based on events – around elections, during upheavals, during protests over particular causes. As such, it remains unclear how citizens in these countries use ICT in ordinary times.

### 3.3 eParticipation in Africa

In this section, I show how eParticipation in Africa remains an under-studied subject, point to challenges faced by eParticipation as identified in literature, and make the case for increased use of ICT to improve governance. Let me provide a caveat here. Reviewing the status on eParticipation in Africa is not meant to suggest that the situation prevailing in Uganda is applicable to all of Africa. Rather, this thesis studies an authoritarian country context, which includes some but not all African countries. That context is not exclusive to African countries; it is relevant to countries with democratic, social and technological similarities to Uganda – such as low levels of ICT literacy and access, citizen mistrust in safety and efficacy of eParticipation, and access to information. The reason I present this review on the state of eParticipation in Africa is because it offers broad contextual background that is relevant to Uganda, such as challenges to ICT use and to eParticipation, and the limited knowledge on how ICT is affecting political participation. Uganda has various techno-demographic similarities with numerous sub-Saharan African countries. Moreover, many countries on the
continent have democracy deficits similar to Uganda’s. One study shows that in Africa, 27 out of 54 countries are ruled by a regime characterised as authoritarian, 13 are under regimes that have both democratic and autocratic elements, and a further nine characterised as flawed democracies (EIU, 2014).

Africa’s growing ICT use makes ICT worth exploring as a tool for catalysing citizen participation. Internet access stands at 20.7%, while mobile phone access is 69% of the population, according to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU, 2015). However, there is little research on e-government in Africa (Dombeu et al., 2014). There is limited empirical evidence on the use of ICT in governance in East Africa, despite growing investment in this area (Sika, 2015) and there are few examples in Sub-Saharan Africa of direct political action facilitated by mobile devices and networks (Hellström, 2015). Gagliardone et al. (2015), who reviewed literature on ICT and participation in Africa, concluded that although there was much excitement and optimism about the role of ICT in governance, the evidence of actual impact was thin.

Indubitably, the internet, mobile phones, and other ICT tools and services are increasingly being used in political processes in Africa, including to promote human rights monitoring (Gagliardone et al., 2015), in election campaigns and monitoring (Kretchun, 2013; Hellström, 2015), and in promoting transparency and accountability in government operations (Ndavula & Mdeira, 2012; Zanello & Maassen, 2011). ICT is helping to amplify citizens’ voices, increasing civic awareness and empowering citizens to monitor the delivery of services (Subhajyoti, 2012; Arpit, 2012; Woro & Supriyanto, 2013). The spread of mobile phones, crowdsourcing technologies, and social networks have particularly enabled messages to be amplified, information flows to be accelerated, and new spaces to be opened up for the involvement of individuals and communities (Coyle & Meier, 2009). In Kenya, Ndavula and Mdeira (2012) found that social networks were acting as communication spaces that promoted democracy through individuals’ "articulation of democratic ideas." Research by Asiimwe et al. (2013), Wamala (2013) and Gagliardone et al. (2015) found that in Uganda and East Africa, some social accountability initiatives that used ICT were giving voice to individuals who otherwise would not participate in community affairs, improving citizens’ civic skills and helping to hold local leaders and service providers accountable.

However, Gagliardone et al. (2015) noted that the “if-you-build-it-they-will-come” refrain common in literature on eParticipation in Africa assumes
that access to ICT will spur particular democratic behaviour and political
and democratic outcomes, but eschews evaluation of how particular cul-
tural and sociological contexts drive ICT use in unique or unexpected ways.
Many obstacles stand in the way of meaningful eParticipation in Africa,
including low levels of literacy (both informational and ICT), high costs of
accessing ICT, and shortages of electricity. Nkohkwo and Islam (2013),
who reviewed literature on eGovernment in Africa, identified the main chal-
enges to implementing eGovernment as related to infrastructure (e.g. inter-
net access and connectivity, scarcity of computers, and low power supply)
and human aspects (e.g. low awareness and access, gender inequality, low
citizen participation). Information illiteracy hampers the efficient adoption
and utilisation of ICT on the continent (Tilvawala et al., 2009). A study by
Moraa et al. (2012) found that Kenyan citizens had no trust and confidence
in using mobiles for communicating with government and service providers.
In Uganda, there is widespread perception of risks of retribution and intim-
idadation for expressing a particular opinion or supporting a political cause
(CIPESA, 2015). In an analysis of citizens’ motivations for utilising ICT in
citizen participation and democracy, CIPESA (2012) found that despite
widespread awareness of ICT-based tools for participation, a significant
proportion of Ugandan citizens preferred non-ICT spheres for engaging in
democratic processes.

Asogwa (2011) reported on the under-utilisation of ICT for the provision
of efficient government services in Africa, while Waiswa and Okello-Obura
(2014) noted that bandwidth was not sufficient to spur efficient online ser-
dvice delivery and most eGovernance initiatives in countries such as Uganda
were largely dependent on external funding, which put their sustainability
into question. Zanello and Maassen (2011) also cited the lack of financial
sustainability, as well as bad design, wrong implementation, and political
interference as primary factors that prevented ICT-for-governance projects
in Kenya, Tanzania, and Uganda from moving beyond pilot phase. Ochara
(2012) argues that under the alienating conditions of digital exclusion in
Africa, there is an evolution of public administration towards a technocracy
and increasing the efficiency of government bureaucracy through “manage-
rialisation”, which reinforces digital exclusion and thus hinders effective
eParticipation. A study on the participation platform Uganda Watch found
user concerns that hindered greater use by citizens related to costs, trust,
and safety (Hellström, 2015). The citizens who participated on Uganda
Watch said it was because they hoped it would bring real change to
Uganda’s electoral and political landscape, it was a quick and easy channel to use, and their confidentiality was assured.

In South Africa, the public has a generally poor opinion of government services, even though web and mobile technologies are being used (Bagui & Bytheway, 2012). Based on a survey of 1,044 South African students, Oyedemi (2015) found that contrary to studies that support claims that online social networking may lead to heightened political activity, students did not engage politically online, although they had a high social relation engagement online. But it is not only African governments minimally using ICT for participation. An analysis by Steenkamp and Hyde-Clarke (2014) of the Facebook pages of South Africa’s two leading political parties found that the parties did not participate in political discussions online, and when they posted information on the site, “it was to impart knowledge and information, and not to engage in a conversation with the public” (p. 6).

3.4 ICT and Social Accountability
ICT can play a role in amplifying citizens’ voices, increasing awareness and civic education through mass communication, empowering citizens to engage, and monitoring and evaluating the delivery of services (Subhajyoti, 2012; Arpit, 2012; Woro & Supriyanto, 2013; Wamala, 2013). However, it has also been argued that while many look at modern technology as a panacea for old problems, “it appears that their power for enhancing transparency, imposing international accountability and fostering cooperation stretches only as far as the will of respective nation states bends to embrace and adopt them” (Selian, 2002, p. 39). Both the social accountability area and the wider eParticipation field fit within the broader ICT4D debate, which is concerned with how ICT can make a difference for development. This “development”, as argued by Unwin (2009), is not only about economic growth but also encompasses equality of access, participation, and empowerment.

Unwin (2009) also noted that no amount of new technology is necessarily going to improve government unless there is already a desire within government for change. Similarly, Maximo and Braun (2006) observed that connectivity, capability to use new tools and content, in terms of relevant information provided in accessible and useful form, are key to effective utilisation of ICT. Indeed, an exploration of the linkage between ICT and development needs to take cognisance of the theory of human development as articulated by scholars such as Bada and Madon (2006), which holds that
a central goal of human resource development involves increasing the knowledge, skills, and capacities of all the people in a society as well as the promotion of their well-being. The assumption that the provision of technological solutions directly translates into an inclusion in the network society is incorrect. This is because the availability of technology-enabled services does not necessarily mean they will be taken up by users. That is an issue Unwin (2009) spoke to, when he observed that those implementing technological solutions need to ensure that they are context specific and adapted to local needs and conditions and that choice of technological solutions in any particular circumstance should be informed by an understanding of a range of economic, social, political and ideological factors.

Central to the transparency and accountability idea is the concept of social accountability, described as an approach towards building accountability that relies on civic engagement in which ordinary citizens and civil society organisations participate directly or indirectly in exacting accountability (World Bank, 2004). It embraces “a broad range of actions (beyond voting) that citizens, communities, civil society organisations, and other interest groups can use to hold government officials and bureaucrats accountable” (Mgwebi, 2011, p. 4). These, Mgwebi notes, include citizen participation in public policy-making, participatory budgeting, public expenditure tracking, citizen monitoring of public service delivery, citizen advisory boards, lobbying, and advocacy campaigns. Social accountability is critical in creating transparent and representative governments and also helps public institutions to meet the expectations of the population (Reuben & Levy-Benitez, 2003). Moreover, transparency and accountability are known to be conducive to reducing corruption by making procedures more open and making governments assume more responsibility for improving and controlling processes related to services to citizens so as to reduce the opportunities for individuals to find space for private gains (Asiimwe et al., 2013; Grönlund, 2010).

Increasingly, ICT is seen as an enabler of social accountability. Examples include websites functioning as portals where citizens can post public complaints related to their government’s performance and administration. This thus serves to give citizens better access to information through technologies and offers them new ways to participate (Avila et al., 2010). Bertot et al. (2012) noted that social media applications of the internet have the potential to enhance existing approaches to transparency and foster new cultures of openness “both by giving governments new tools to promote transparency and reduce corruption and by empowering members of the public to
collectively take part in monitoring the activities of their governments” (p. 9). The ability to monitor work processes using ICT systems, and to easily expose corrupt behaviours by digitalised data, partly arises from the fact that higher ranked government officials can track the work flow any time they want and find problems more easily (Shim & Eom, 2008). Technology-for-transparency initiatives entail both “push” efforts of giving voice to civil society and “pull” efforts of raising awareness on the part of the public (Kuriyan, 2011). While “push” efforts aim to give voice to civil society, the “pull” efforts try to provide an accessible information pool from which the public can pull relevant information to better inform their demand for improved governance and service delivery (ibid). Furthermore, the cost of monitoring is relatively low because extra investigation is rarely needed (Shim & Eom, 2008).

However, according to Peixoto and Fox (2016), while growing media coverage of ICT-enabled voice platforms is often enthusiastic, research on the dynamics and impacts of these initiatives lags far behind, and the limited existing evidence does not yet support unqualified optimism. Disclosure of feedback and of responses to issues raised by citizens, the modality for voicing concerns, and institutional responsiveness are some of the factors they identified that could lead to success of ICT-enabled social accountability systems. Another factor identified by Peixoto and Fox (ibid) is "combined offline action" i.e. whether additional actions are taken offline in order to encourage government responsiveness.

The literature reviewed above indicates that ICT holds great promise to improve the participation of citizens in democratic processes and to contribute to development. But there is little research on eParticipation in authoritarian countries and the key link between social accountability and wider participation is often lacking in scholarship, yet it should be of interest to eParticipation scholars. This, despite the need to ensure greater transparency and accountability, so as to minimise corruption and abuse, an area where ICT could be used by citizens in authoritarian countries such as Uganda. However, the literature is short of actual cases that explore the critical enablers and inhibitors of citizens’ use of ICT in democratic processes, including quality of public services monitoring. I explore this issue in sections 5.4 and 7.3.
4 Theoretical Foundations of the Thesis

Theories from the fields of political science and media studies dominate the area of eParticipation research (Susha & Grönlund, 2012), and the eParticipation field seems not to have drawn much on relevant theories of technology from adjacent fields such as information systems, sociology of technology, or evolutionary economics (Bohman, 2014). Still, some theories are more commonly used in eParticipation research. This thesis utilises the Civic Voluntarism Model and the IS artefact theory, but also draws from eParticipation theory.

4.1 The Civic Voluntarism Model

This thesis uses as a reference the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM), a well-known and widely applied theory of political participation in political science (Whiteley, 2011; Pattie et al., 2004). The CVM is directly anchored in political participation and its articulation of the resources that enable participation is very amenable to analysis of social network use. Moreover, while this theory has been popular among political participation scholars, and also a subject of criticism, there have been few eParticipation studies using the CVM in developing, or authoritarian, country contexts, to establish its applicability and suggest improvements to it. The CVM, whose origins are traced to the research work of Sydney Verba and Norman Nie on participation in the U.S., is treated by the thesis both as a reference and as an object for improvement.

An extension of the Socio-Economic Status (SES) model, this theory suggests that people become engaged in politics if they have the resources and the time, and if they are asked to participate (Rüdig & Karyotis, 2013). The SES model, itself for long popularly used to explain political behaviour, focuses on the resources of an individual, including their education, occupation, and income, in analysing their political participation. While based on the SES model of participation, civic voluntarism extends the socio-economic model, by for instance conceptualising resources widely to include not only economic and educational resources, but also resources of time (Pattie et al., 2004).

According to Verba et al. (1995), who advanced the CVM, individuals find the costs of participating low enough, and the benefits high enough, when they are equipped with resources of time, money, and civic skills, have a sense of psychological engagement with politics and current events, and
have been recruited by someone in their environment to participate, such as a member of their social network. Verba and colleagues also show that of these factors, resources and engagement are the most important in determining whether the benefits of civic participation outweigh the costs. Social networking sites have various elements that drive down the costs as envisaged by the CVM. The model has, as a result, been applied to studies of SNS use and their effect on individuals’ participation behaviour. Gustafsson (2012) argues that whereas resources in themselves would not be affected by using social network sites, a wider repertoire of political activities (such as various forms of online participation) is available compared to, for instance, attending meetings in formal organisations, while lowering the cost of participation by making it more flexible might make participating more attractive. Gustafsson (ibid) concluded that SNS might potentially lower the thresholds for participating by introducing new and more flexible forms in which it can be done, but this was not enough for making non-actives ready for participation. Other factors, such as a reluctance to make political views known to friends and other contacts, as well as insecurity concerning the credibility of campaigns, seemed to offset this among several individuals who were not members of organised groups.

However, the CVM has been criticised for focusing exclusively on the “supply” side of the equation and neglecting “demand” side aspects, as it stipulates that individuals supply more participation if they have the resources or a psychological sense of efficacy. According to Pattie et al (2004), what is missing in the CVM “is any understanding of why individuals have no such incentives, which explains why they do not participate” (p. 147). Similar criticism was advanced by Phelps (2006) using the equity-fairness theories which postulate that members of traditionally disadvantaged groups who feel that they are treated unfairly in comparison to other groups and that they cannot get their voices heard through conventional political participation, are motivated to participate by a sense of disadvantage and are more likely to vent their frustrations in other types of political participation such as protest. According to Phelps (ibid), in the equity-fairness model, “unlike the civic voluntarism model, a lack of resources inhibits conventional participation but promotes un-conventional activity” (p. 21).

Phang and Kankanhalli (2005) also pointed to the limitations of the CVM, noting that, as with the SES model, the proposition that more resources will lead to higher participation is questionable, as studies had showed that participation was declining despite the general rise of living standards. Meanwhile, Zavadskaya and Welzel (2013) argued that theories
such as CVM which emphasise the resource basis of participation ignore the psychological motivators of such participation. Rubenson (2000) had other criticisms of the CVM, observing that the elements of this theory may indeed be necessary for political participation to take place but they are not a sufficient explanation. The shortcoming was that the step from having resources to participating in politics was not apparent.

In articulating the civic voluntarism theory, Verba et al. (1995) stated that a helpful way to understand the factors that account for political activity is to ask why people do not become politically active. Three answers came to mind, they argued: because they can't; because they don't want to; or because nobody asked. They stated, “In other words people may be inactive because they lack resources, because they lack psychological engagement with politics, or because they are outside of the recruitment networks that bring people into politics (p. 269).” However, the civic voluntarism theorists did not exhaustively delineate some of the negation factors – such as the effect of fear of reprisals and political apathy - which my thesis is advancing. My research tested the factors which the CVM considered to be important determinants of participation – such as availability of time, skills, money, psychological connection to politics and recruitment networks. I asked study participants how availability of these “resources” affected their proclivity to participate and whether possessing resources was sufficient to induce participation. Verba and colleagues argued that resources and engagement were the most important factors in determining whether the benefits of civic participation outweigh the costs. In section 7.4, I revisit some of these criticisms and analyse the applicability of the CVM to countries with low use of technology and high democracy deficits.

4.2 The IS Artefact Theory
Besides the CVM, this thesis utilises the Information Systems (IS) artefact theory advanced by Lee et al. (2015). This theory identifies three components of the IS artefact (the technology artefact, the information artefact and the social artefact) which together interact in order to form the IS artefact. This comprehensive definition of the IS artefact helps to contextualise the technology artefact (what is widely known as the IT artefact, and what has been central to information systems studies). Moreover, as Lee and colleagues have pointed out, the concept of the IS artefact better distinguishes the technological artefact from its context without necessarily diminishing the importance of this context. Over several years, the IT artefact has been
recognised as essential in studies of information technology (e.g. Benbasat & Zmud, 2003; Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001). More recently, however, the IT artefact has been more appropriately identified as part of the information systems (IS) artefact (Lee et al, 2015).

In their seminal paper, Lee et al. (2015) isolate the parts that constitute the information system artefact and explain how these elements interact with each other to form the IS artefact. They conceptualise the IS artefact as being comprised of the ‘information artefact’, ‘technology artefact’ and ‘social artefact’; with these different artefacts enabling, interacting with and transforming one another, and in coming together as an IS “they ultimately serve to solve a problem or achieve a goal for individuals, groups, organisations, societies or other social units” (p. 6). This comprehensive conceptualisation of the IS artefact thus takes forward the work by earlier theoreticians such as Benbasat and Zmud by providing a broader and more contextualised definition of the IS artefact, rather than taking the IT artefact as a standalone and the all-important aspect of an information system.

According to Benbasat and Zmud (2003), one of the key areas of interest for IS scholars is how IT artefacts impact on, and are impacted by, the contexts in which they are embedded. As a consequence of use, the impacts (direct and indirect, intended and unintended) of these artefacts on the humans who interact with them, structures and contexts within which they are embedded, and associated collectives (groups, work units, organisations) are all areas of IS study. My thesis explores SNS as an IS artefact, including individuals’ motivation for using it, how their technological features enable participation and the benefits of its use in participation, which are central areas in IS study.

Akhlaghpour et al. (2013), who studied how papers published in top IS journals treated the IT artefact, noted that although Orlikowski and Iacono’s call for theorising the IT artefact and employing richer conceptualisations was issued over 10 years ago, the field had not witnessed much improvement in this regard. They thus called for efforts to conceptualise and theorise the IT artefact, including by studies providing explicit considerations and theoretical explanations of the IT artefact they analyse. In this vein, Lee et al. (2015) stated that further development of the differing kinds of artefacts that can make up an IS artefact can further deepen our understanding of design and IS. For example, they observed that their conceptualisation of social artefacts was silent on political aspects of the social. They argued that a political component in an IS artefact might be represented by the interaction of a citizen with online government systems; and political
kinds of artefacts could exist independently of other kinds and may be an artefact of IS available for further study. My thesis contributes to the IS artefact by illuminating the political artefact in SNS when used for eParticipation. It also builds on the IS artefact as unpacked by Lee et al. (2015), to show how SNS-for-participation contain the various constitutive aspects of the IS artefact, and how they need to be aligned for eParticipation to work.

Winner (1980) was an early proponent of the political view in artefacts, when he argued that technical systems of various kinds are deeply interwoven in the conditions of modern politics. In his 1980 paper titled “Do Artefacts Have Politics”, Winner argued that it was obvious that technologies could be used in ways that enhance the power, authority, and privilege of some over others, giving the example of the use of television to sell a candidate. Winner contends that some technologies are by their very nature political in a specific way; and adoption of a given technical system unavoidably brings with it conditions for human relationships that have a distinctive political cast, for example, centralised or decentralised, egalitarian or unequalitarian, repressive or liberating. Although there has been little scholarly follow-up of Winner’s idea of the political artefact, Coeckelbergh (2007) noted that the crucial move that makes the concept of a politics of artefacts possible is a redefinition of the social as one hybrid sphere or collective in which there is a place for both humans and non-humans. This line of thought would resonate with key proposition of the theory on the social determinism of technology, which holds that in many ways, technology is shaped by social and economic forces. A classic article on politics and IS implementation by Lynne Markus is useful for understanding the social part and political part of the IS artefact. In this article, Markus (1980) posited that central to the political perspective on information systems implementation are the intention, motivations and desires of key actors, users and designers. According to her, the political perspective “explains resistance as a consequence of the loss in power which would result from using a system if users used it as it was designed (intended) to be used” (p. 58). Whereas Markus was writing about introduction of information systems in organisations, her work is relevant to other technology-mediated relations, such as those in eParticipation. She rightly argued that the political perspective attempts to explain shifts in the balance of power among various groups, by four factors: the original balance of power among the groups, intentions and motivations to gain power through an information system, political tac-
tics around the process of implementing systems (particularly user participation and post-installation activities) and the degree of resistance generated by the system.

A growth in interest in the relationship between technology and democracy among scholars and in practice was noted by Sclove (1999). But that interest was concerned exclusively with democratic procedures in making decisions about technologies, and omitted “the equally important question of whether technologies are substantively democratic - that is, whether a technology’s design and use is compatible with perpetuating democratic social relations” (ibid). Although he argued that technology has become a primary means to empowerment in modern society, Brey (2007) also posited that technology can help individuals or groups exercise power over others by either giving them new powers or by improving the efficiency, effectiveness, reliability and ease by which existing powers are exercised.

An alternative way in which I consider the political artefact is by looking at the work of Richard Sclove, whose 1995 book “Democracy and Technology” draws up design criteria for democratic technologies (Sclove, 1995). The criteria include technologies that can enable disadvantaged individuals and groups to participate fully in social, economic, and political life; and technologies that support democratic knowledge production and dissemination. The technologies that negate democracy are those that establish authoritarian relationships, support illegitimately hierarchical power relations between groups, organisations, or polities; and technologies that are vulnerable to catastrophic sabotage and to the attendant risks of civil liberties abridgement. But Brey (2007) contends that the political implications of technological artefacts do not result from their physical design but from a combination of their design features, the meanings and interpretations attached to the technology and the social and material structures and correlated practices in which the technology is embedded. Not all scholars in this field entirely subscribe to this, and these include Foner (2002), who made the case for creating political artefacts, described as “technological devices intended to facilitate particular political aims—in this case, to enable certain civil liberties to be more easily protected worldwide” (p 1). In making the case that advancing civil liberties through technical means was feasible and desirable, Foner contended that software necessarily imposes a particular world-view and political agenda and is rarely, if ever, value-neutral.

By their nature, social media such as Facebook are a liberating technology – a leveller that enables ordinary citizens to speak up to authority. But
Reuter and Szakonyi (2015) have argued that social media needs to be politicised in order to be a catalyst for eParticipation in authoritarian regimes. Framed under the conception of the IS artefact by Lee et al. (2015), in my thesis the SNS and their technological features constitute the technology artefact; information that is essential to functioning as an active citizen and necessary to eParticipation represents the information artefact; while existing relationships (such as government-to-citizen (G2C) and citizen-to-citizen (C2C), as well as on platforms such as discussion groups) constitute the social artefacts. I discuss this issue at length in section 7.5.

4.3 Characteristics of eParticipation

This section defines eParticipation, the activities that are commonly stipulated in eParticipation models, and common motivations for eParticipation. It also reviews literature on the link between use of ICT and participation as well as citizens’ use of ICT, notably social media, in countries with a democracy deficit. I begin with a review of literature on what constitutes eParticipation so as to establish the range of activities that are generally understood as being part of eParticipation. The exploration of what constitutes eParticipation then forms the basis for the review of literature on how new media use affects citizens’ proclivity to participate. I also explore the features of social networking sites (SNS) that enable participation.

Research on eParticipation has produced many models but all of them are tentative proposals rather than solid findings, hence they lack universal acceptability. What a review of these models provided me with is an understanding of the characteristics or attributes of eParticipation as well as the motivations for eParticipation. In coupling the review of models with a review of eParticipation literature, I was able to pinpoint overall ideas on current issues and challenges in the field that most scholars agree to. The various issues and challenges to eParticipation success also served as general background to the research questions and provided a backdrop for the analysis. An effective review creates a firm foundation for advancing knowledge. As has been noted by Webster & Watson (2002) literature review can facilitate theory development, closes areas where a plethora of research exists, and uncovers areas where research is needed.

Macintosh and Whyte (2008) define eParticipation as the use of ICT to support information provision and “top-down” engagement i.e. government-led initiatives, or “bottom-up” efforts to empower citizens, civil society organisations and other democratically constituted groups to gain the
support of their elected representatives. According to Beaumaster (2007), eParticipation is a specific tool for the development and enhancement of public participation as well as a means for access to elected officials and administrators. In theory, eParticipation offers individuals, groups and non-governmental institutions the opportunity to learn about and discuss policy so they can make more informed choices in their personal lives as citizens, and to contribute to policy drafting as an instrument to strengthen the quality of decision-makers’ actions (Sánchez-Nielsen et al., 2014). In practice, however, there are few examples of this. Sanford and Rose (2007) state that participation can be generally understood as joining in, either in the sense of taking part in some communal discussion or activity, or in the sense of taking some role in decision-making. While it can take different shapes, eParticipation is normally associated with some form of political deliberation or decision-making. However, much of the literature I reviewed showed that deliberation is an area where eParticipation often fails and there are not many examples of sustained (as opposed to experimental, short-term) deliberation in eParticipation initiatives.

Sæbø et al. (2008) argue that the purpose of eParticipation is to increase citizens' abilities to participate in digital governance, including participation in political processes and transformation of digital government information and services. Theoretically, eParticipation changes the nature of interactions between citizens and politicians (Freschi et al., 2009). The governance processes that comprise participation may concern administration, service delivery, decision making and policy making (Avdic et al., 2007) and can take place within the formal political process such as voting, or outside it such as political activism (Sanford & Rose, 2007). Often, eParticipation is motivated by a need for citizens to participate in government processes, or civil actors to put government in check through citizens’ voice and government accountability. From the government angle, eParticipation can help to provide legitimacy to government actions, helping to generate citizen opinions and buy-in to state programmes. Indeed some of the early research on eParticipation, such as by Blaug (2002), noted that eParticipation was part of the wider efforts to deepen democracy undertaken by political institutions or civil society. Other early scholars such as Arnst (1996), Rahman (1995), and Blaug (2002) noted that citizen-driven participation was becoming ever more popular and relevant in governance, as ‘incumbent democracy’ was losing favour with citizens. The motivation was for citizens to play a more active role in governance, notably in citizen-driven processes or bottom-up participation initiated by civil society to influence politics in some way.
Macintosh and Whyte (2002) similarly spoke to this motivation, when they observed the need to consider new tools for public engagement that enable a wider audience to contribute to the policy debate and where contributions are broader and deeper. Such measures would help to address the “democratic deficit” where decision-making lacks transparency and there are communication gaps between citizens and leaders.

More recent eParticipation studies identify changing form and mediums of participation, areas of eParticipation research, and increasingly, the role of social media in eParticipation (Medaglia, 2011; Sæbø, 2011; Susa & Grönlund, 2012; Effing et al., 2011; Scherer & Wimmer, 2014; Kavanaugh et al., 2014; Holt et al., 2013; Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011). The changing technological landscape also means that various activities are enabled and multi-directional communication flows are now more possible than ever. As noted by Medaglia (2011), Web 2.0 applications, such as SNS, wikis, and blogs, have the potential of putting the citizen as a user of government services at the centre of ICT-enabled participatory processes.

However, looking at motivations to eParticipation as expounded in early research or the changed mediums and nature of participation as enabled by ICT, it is evident many challenges hamper successful and sustained eParticipation implementation. In some areas such as information provision, some (notably, democratic) governments are doing a good job. Areas more lacking include citizens discussing policy and contributing to policy making, deliberations among citizens or between citizens and leaders, and public officials’ responsiveness to issues raised by citizens. This review of eParticipation literature and models also shows challenges to successive implementation of eParticipation are also common in developed countries with a long democratic tradition. Digital inequalities in the networked society (Effing et al., 2011; Hacker et al., 2009;), limited deliberation and politicians’ reluctance to embrace eParticipation (Sæbø, 2011; Freschi et al., 2009); a lack of interest in policy issues and low levels of trust in politicians and in eParticipation endeavours (Lee et al., 2011; Scherer & Wimmer, 2014) are common challenges cited by scholars.

Participation areas change over time, with contextual factors such as technology playing a role. Indeed, a number of models elaborate participation and eParticipation. Many of these models partly draw on the Ladder of Citizen Participation postulated by Arnstein (1969), which describes and analyses several levels of participation in public policy. The model lists the levels as Manipulation, Therapy, Informing, Consultation, Placation, Part-
nership, Delegated Power, and Citizen Control. But the models of participation that have drawn on Arnstein’s work and others in contemporary scholarship do not entail a uniform form of activities, nor do they provide the same motivations for participation. As Grönlund (2009) observed after examining eParticipation models, in practice the term eParticipation was used for many government activities involving contact with citizens and many of these activities were not directly, or even clearly, related to democracy as a decision-making system.

Early studies about citizen participation and the new opportunities that ICT provides focused on access to public life information, public discussions about political themes, and support to electronic voting (Kalampokis et al., 2008). However, new aspects were injected into this approach and new areas of eParticipation emerged. In a literature study, Sæbø et al. (2008) identified electronic voting, online political discourse, online decision making, eActivism, eConsultation, eCampaigning, and ePetitioning as common participation activities. Another framework that contains several of the activities captured by earlier models was developed by Tambouris et al. (2007) and presents eParticipation and its main democratic processes, including voting, campaigning, campaign financing, public debate and discussion, civics education, and processes within and between political parties, grassroots organisations, information intermediaries and communication between policy makers and the public. According to this model, an eParticipation initiative’s direction can progress from the democratic processes top-down to the technologies or could be technology-driven bottom-up towards democratic processes.

There are generally weak relationships among models (Porwol et al., 2013), and some scholars have argued that most models lack a complete view of the eParticipation domain regarding concepts and relationships (Kalampokis et al., 2008). The models tend to focus on different tasks necessary to implement an eParticipation project and none of them provides a holistic approach (Scherer & Wimmer, 2011). Porwol et al. (2013) similarly noted that most of the eParticipation models focused on describing levels of participation or engagement and evaluating eParticipation, with many of them descriptive in nature but lacking conceptual or theoretical underpinnings. Meanwhile, Grönlund (2009) argued that a problem with existing eParticipation models was that central concepts were not clearly defined and measurement scales were consequently not clear and often confused different measures. Grönlund also argued that the models conveyed a false impression of progress, but neither the goal, nor the path or the stakeholders
driving the development were clearly understood, presented, or evidenced. A commonality among many of the models is a focus on information exchange, general discourse, or deliberation (Beaumaster, 2007).

From a review of various literature and models on online participation or eParticipation (Sæbø et al., 2008; Sanford & Rose, 2007; Grönlund, 2009; Kalampokis et al., 2008; Grönlund, 2011), it emerges that common features of participation include: Informing, Consulting, Involving, Engagement, Empowerment, and Collaboration. Seeking news and information, joining online networks, political conversations, also constitute eParticipation activities (Tambouris et al., 2007). As such, this thesis views a broad range of activities as constituting participation, including joining online networks, online political discourse, eActivism, online decision making, citizen education, eCampaigning, eConsultation and ePetitioning. Exploring the participation activities that are common among the various models is important because these activities, which make up the core of eParticipation practice, form a basis of my interview questions and analysis. As was seen in the method chapter, in my research I asked about individuals’ participation in various activities as identified in the models reviewed. Furthermore, I took an interest in aspects of social accountability and social participation (the degree of an individual’s participation in a community or society), given the interest of the thesis in bottom-up processes and the crucial role an active civil society has to play in advancing democracy. Section 3.4 tackles the issue of ICT and social accountability, and as I argue in section 7.3, social accountability such as whistle-blowing on quality of public services can be a breeding ground for wider political participation.

### 4.4 Internet Use and Participation

Does the use of the internet stimulate participation? Two decades ago, Castells (1996) argued that the internet provided easy access to information and offered a sphere for communication that could enhance political interest and pull citizens into the democratic process. Since then the contestations of the role of the internet in participation have elicited interest in the connection between online and offline participation, such as the work by Cullen and Sommer (2011), which surveyed groups engaged in some form of civic activity in both online and offline groups. It concluded that there was a correlation between internet engagement and offline civic engagement. Other studies have pointed to the differential use of various media and how it correlates differently to participation. Bakker and de Vreese (2011) found
that using the internet for news had a positive effect on various forms of participation. They also established that, in addition to all kinds of informational uses, non-informational uses of the web such as online communication and visiting non-news websites also correlated positively with various forms of participation. Zúñiga et al. (2012) likewise noted that media use related to information acquisition such as TV news and community building (such as online communities) more positively associated with civic participation. On the other hand, use related to entertainment (such as reality shows and online movies) negatively impacted on participation.

Gustafsson (2012) also concluded that despite claims that new forms of media might be connected to political cynicism and apathy, empirical research had shown that informational use of media might make people more inclined to discuss political matters and in the long run increase engagement and participation levels. Zúñiga et al. (2010) found that both political talk and online political messaging had significant effects among blog readers for online expressive participation, while political talk (but not online political messaging) appeared more important for offline political participation. In an experiment conducted in Belgium involving 109 participants aged between 18 and 25 years, Vissers, at al. (2011) found that the effects of mobilisation media tended to be medium-specific. Web mobilisation led to increased online participation while face-to-face mobilisation led to increased offline participation. The study by Vissers and colleagues study found that face-to-face mobilisation did not affect online participation, and also suggested that Internet mobilisation did not boost offline participation.

4.4.1 Social Media Use and Effect on Participation
This section reviews literature on how social media use can affect citizens’ participation. This sets the context in which SNS use in Uganda is to be seen, and hence it informs the subsequent analysis in this thesis.

With the advent and growing popularity of social media, research interest is growing in the use of SNS and its effects on participation (Effing et al., 2011; Gustafsson, 2012; Sæbo, 2011; Lee & Kim, 2012; Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011; Klofstad, 2009; Kavanaugh et al., 2014; Holt et al., 2013; Afouxenidis, 2014; Howard et al., 2011). According to Mislove (2007), the popularity of these sites provides an opportunity to study the characteristics of online social networks at a large scale. These sites form a network that provides a powerful means of sharing, organising, and finding content and contacts (ibid). According to Medaglia (2011), collaborative platforms such
as wikis, the horizontal distribution of communication channels in SNS, and the emergence of platforms based on user-generated content, ideally make it easier for citizens to coordinate, communicate, produce, and share political power vis-à-vis the traditional government institutions dedicated to decision-making.

Researchers have pointed to uses of SNS that are more related to increased participation. For instance, Räsänen (2008) argued that citizens who followed what happened in their community and kept up-to-date with public affairs tended to be more politically engaged than their peers who did not follow the news. Cullen and Sommer (2011) also concluded that there was a correlation between internet engagement and offline civic engagement, after investigating the impact ICT had as a communications channel and in supporting online networking, on citizens' participation in civic activities. Lee and Kim (2012) noted that citizens' eParticipation was less active if they simply searched for information and observed the postings of others, rather than for instance posting their suggestions or replying to others’ postings. While arguing that it was possible to extend the positive effects that social network discussions have on political behaviours could also be extended to civic participation, Zúñiga and Valenzuela (2011) contended that citizens who reported larger conversational circles - online and offline - tended to engage more in civic life. Afouxenidis (2014) examined the relationship between 165 Greek web users and whether they engaged in political activity offline as a result of becoming relatively active online. Afouxenidis (ibid) concluded that although online participation may slightly increase political knowledge, this does not mean increased levels of participation which strongly correlate to internet use. He considered active individuals online to include those who posted political messages over the internet and social media; participated in mailing lists; wrote in forums; and regularly visited web pages of various social movements.

Holt et al. (2013), in a study in Sweden, found "substantial support" for the idea that use of social media for political purposes may function as a leveller of political interest and participation between younger and older citizens. Kavanaugh et al. (2014), in a study in the U.S., found that social media use for civic purposes was less strongly associated with and predicted by education and extroversion compared to offline and traditional internet (i.e., email and web browsing) contexts. Meanwhile, Sæbø et al. (2009) argued that, while citizens do not necessarily participate in government eParticipation programmes just because they have been made available, SNS attract large numbers of users, and sustain a great deal of discussions – though
not always the serious political deliberation and discourse targeted by eParticipation services. Meanwhile, Zúñiga and Valenzuela (2011) found that individuals’ attitudes could exert a strong effect on their willingness to join and participate in civic activities. They found that when people felt contentment or “life satisfaction”, they found a motive to be linked positively to participation in collective activities and civic volunteerism. Successful experiences of civic engagement could lead to higher levels of life satisfaction. Zúñiga and Valenzuela (2011) also established that organisational membership and having trust were key ingredients of civic voluntarism, while distrust and cynicism resulted in withdrawal from community affairs.

While comparing the effects of consuming news on preference for political participation online or offline, Bachmann et al. (2010) noted that internet use may have varying effects on people’s political participation by their age. Räsnänen’s 2008 study in Finland showed that people’s preference for online media contributed to political participation both online and offline. Likewise, Tworzecki and Semetko (2010) investigated the impact of media use on political knowledge, political participation, and political learning, and concluded that media use had a positive effect on political knowledge and on participation. Meanwhile, Stroud (2008) pointed to evidence supporting the idea that people's political beliefs were related to their media exposure, and that this pattern persisted across media types.

Earlier, Weber et al. (2003) argued that participation on the internet exerted a positive influence on political participation, mainly because the internet subsidised the costs of participation. However, Weber and colleagues also noted that while there was debate focusing on the potential of the internet to facilitate social activity, community networks, and political participation, another on-going debate focused on potential social consequences, such as decreased face-to-face social interaction and unequal access to information. Moy and Xenos (2007) similarly observed that scholars had categorised most research on new media effects on civic and political life as either optimistic or pessimistic. While optimists believed new media promoted democracy in a variety of ways (e.g. lowering costs of communication, association, and participation), pessimists cautioned that new media would likely not lead to significant changes in political behaviour and may even harm public life. Ultimately, contemporary literature seems in accord that SNS use can affect individuals’ ability and proclivity to participate, but recognises that motivations for actual participation vary among individuals and contexts.
4.4.2 Features of SNS that Enable Participation
It is essential to understand the features of social networking sites (SNS) that are positive for participation, what they enable and what they do not. Generating such an understanding is crucial to motivating greater eParticipation, which is the central concern of this thesis. Wikis, blogs, social bookmarking tools, Facebook, Twitter, photo- and video-sharing websites (e.g. Flickr, YouTube) and other SNS facilitate gathering and sharing of information and enable collaboration. They also generally provide easy access to information and have a range of features that make them amenable to eParticipation. According to Sæbø et al. (2008), numerous technologies and infrastructures are involved in eParticipation, including online forums, geographic information systems, weblogs, semantic web, ontologies, data mining, security and encryption algorithms, digital signatures, automated textual analysis, and computer supported visualisation. Not all of these tools enable the same kind of eParticipation, hence they are used differently in eParticipation. A great deal of eParticipation research deals with the use of SNS, with Facebook and Twitter being popularly studied (Effing et al., 2011; Gustafsson, 2012; Chen, 2011; Olaniran, 2014; Sæbø, 2011; Lee & Kim, 2012; Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011; Hunold, 2013; Klofstad, 2009; Kavanaugh et al., 2014; Holt et al., 2013; Afouxenidis, 2014; Howard et al., (2011); Aman & Jayroe, 2013; Allagui, 2014). Facebook is a primary interest of this thesis, being the most popular SNS in Uganda and also one that is widely used in eParticipation in various parts of the world, including in countries with similar techno-political contexts to Uganda.

Robertson et al. (2010) argued that Facebook enables the dissemination of private opinion and through their distribution and consumption they facilitate the formation of public opinion via user participation and interaction. But the way these technologies are assembled also has an impact on how they are used (Johannessen & Munkvold, 2012). By joining a group, Facebook users interact with other group members and share information with ease and speed (Chu, 2011), which allows for multi-directional conversations. Robertson et al. (2010) have identified various technological features of Facebook, namely a list of friends; linear threaded discussion forum (or “wall”); threaded discussion forums; status updates; news postings; and information sharing (links, photos, videos). Others are user comments; groups; affiliations; and enabling of un-moderated or moderated conversations, as well as open door and registration participation. Table 4 below represents the technological characteristics and eParticipation capabilities of Facebook as articulated by Johannessen and Munkvold (2012).
Table 4: Technological characteristics and eParticipation capabilities of Facebook (Johannessen & Munkvold, 2012)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Medium</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Functionality</td>
<td>Personalised front page, Profiles, Groups, Networks, “wall” for message posting, Photo uploads, Notes/links, Status updates, events, Video, Chat, 3rd party applications, internal private messaging system, search of content, mobile app for smart phones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of participation</td>
<td>Information, two-way consultation, possibly involvement in the political process (legal constrains need examination)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage in decision making process</td>
<td>Agenda setting, Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actors</td>
<td>Party information workers, politicians, NGOs, individual citizens. All can be sender and receiver of information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>Information, activism, consultation, petitions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expected outcomes</td>
<td>Civic engagement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides outlining the functionalities enabled by Facebook, Table 4 presents the levels of participation that are enabled, which include information provision and two-way interactions. It also considers that agenda-setting as a stage in decision-making is possible on Facebook, while activities such as consultation, petitions, and activism are possible too. This conceptualisation is not ideal and does not represent the actual practice in many countries. For instance, many governments tend to use Facebook mainly to disseminate information rather than for setting agendas. As I mentioned in earlier sections, the level of deliberation and of citizens’ input into policy-making via digital mediums remains low world over, and this is also true of the Facebook medium. Moreover, citizen engagement, the ultimate outcome of the eParticipation that Facebook would enable, remains a preserve of a handful of citizens, even in developed countries – as many studies reported in the literature reviewed in this chapter have shown.
Still, Johannessen & Munkvold (2012) manage to map the possibilities enabled by Facebook as a participation platform.

However, Johannessen and Munkvold (2012) observed that while several authors defined social media as eParticipation technologies based on the sharing of content, user profiles and user generated content, there was still a need to conceptualise social media as an IT artefact. Social media is distinctly not just an IT artefact but an IS artefact if viewed in the lens of the conceptualisation of the IS artefact by Lee et al. (2015): it manifests an information artefact, technology artefact, and social artefact all in one. Moreover, as I argue in section 7.5, there is also a political artefact in SNS and other information systems when they are used for eParticipation.

Meanwhile, Valenzuela et al. (2009) observed that although the existing literature shows a link between Facebook use and individual-level production of social capital, it is not clear what specific features produce these effects. Facebook groups are a particularly popular application that supports unique forms of social interaction and generates discussions based on common interests (Park et al., 2009). Meanwhile, Valenzuela et al. (2009) noted that Facebook can fulfil the informational needs of users, a key ingredient for strengthening weak ties and promoting collective action. In order to keep users updated about their social circles, Facebook has a “News Feed” that appears on each user’s homepage and updates a personalised list of news stories generated by the activity of “friends” such as a change in status or what a friend favours, and “Mini-Feed”, which appears in each individual’s profile.

4.4.3 Questioning the ICT Link to Participation

Quintelier (2008) posited that while some researchers had argued that internet use and the accompanying political resources stimulated political participation, there were also fears that intensive internet use was associated with a withdrawal from public life. However, Gustafsson (2012) concluded that despite claims that new forms of media might be connected to political cynicism and apathy, empirical research had shown that informational use of media might make people more inclined to discuss political matters and in the long run increase engagement and participation levels. However, other scholars have contended that citizens’ online activeness and proclivity to participate depend on the nature of their general involvement in the online world. For instance, Li and Bernhoff (2007) and Bernhoff (2010) describe different citizens’ social technology behaviour. Creators are those
who publish blogs and articles, maintain web pages or regularly upload audio-visual files they create. Conversationalists update status on SNS and post updates on Twitter. Critics comment on someone else’s social media posts, contribute to online forums, and post reviews of products or services. Collectors collect, aggregate, and share information with others. Joiners visit SNS and maintain a profile on an SNS. Spectators are an audience for social content made by others. Inactive users are those who do not participate at all.

The discussion on if and how online and offline engagement are similar or different and if they mutually reinforce each other benefits from a look at the aspects of the internet that are believed to enable and motivate participation in new, better, or potentially more efficient ways. Zúñiga et al. (2010) argued that expressive participation may open a different pathway to participation, as some of the costs associated with this online expressive participation may not be so high. These costs, which can put offline participation out of reach for many people, may encourage a different set of people to engage in online expressive participation and open the political process to a wider range of behaviours. Other researchers (Åström & Granberg, 2007; Shah et al., 2005; Brunsting, 2002) recognised the link between the online and offline environment, but noted that few studies addressed the joint effects these environments exert on participation. This presents a chicken-and-egg scenario. It could be that people who are active offline are also active online. But that supposition then begs the question: Does offline participation hence lead to more internet use and therefore more eParticipation or it is vice versa?

The internet also may decrease risks for individuals that join collective action (Blaug, 2002). As Chadwick (2006) observed, the relative anonymity of the online world renders individuals less accountable for their action, so they feel empowered to speak up against more powerful actors because they have less fear of punishment. This would be truer in authoritarian states where freedom of expression and speech are restricted. One of the strongest early proponents of a link between internet use and increased participation was Weber et al. (2003), who argued that the Internet “can subsidize the cost of participation” by making it easier for citizens to get information about politics such as from government websites, and sharing information via e-mail, Listservs, and chat rooms.

However, Wojcieszak (2009) argued that online political involvement may not always result in positive social outcomes, or in increased participation in the offline life. Quintelier (2008), Jensen et al. (2007), and Shah et
al. (2005) contended that the Internet would either have marginally beneficial or even negative consequences for democracy as it tended to reinforce the same structures that otherwise constituted the determinants of political practices offline, and that Internet use would only help facilitate offline political mobilisation to a limited extent. Komito (2005) reported that although increased technology usage did not lead to increased community involvement as measured by memberships in formal voluntary organisations or by amount of activity in these organisations, new technologies actually facilitated greater informal exchanges and fostered social capital in a community. Meanwhile, Bimber (2000) suggested that taking into account differences in user characteristics, political effects of new media use are contingent on individuals’ levels of sophistication, motives, and social context.

Boulianne (2009), who analysed 38 studies on the effects that internet use had on engagement, concluded that there was strong evidence against the internet having a negative effect on engagement. Although the analysis also found that internet use would not have a substantial impact on engagement, it established that the effects of internet use on engagement were larger when online news was used to measure internet use, compared to other measures. Wojcieszak’s (2009) literature review found that reinforcing online discussions may boost participants’ self-esteem by inflating their views, thereby encouraging them to express those views and motivating them to stand up against an out-group. Boulianne (2011) established that using online news stimulates political interest, which generates political talk; and also that the use of online news sources transforms people into interested and engaged citizens to a greater degree than online news serves as a tool for those already interested in politics. Quintelier (2008) had observed earlier that although some online activities were clearly associated with offline political participation, it remained to be investigated whether this relation was a form of causality.

But this discussion may not be complete without pondering the question: what motivates individuals to participate in politics? Brady et al. (1995) argued that interest in politics was not enough to explain political participation. Rather, the resources of time, money and skills were also powerful predictors of political participation. There are other issues that hinder eParticipation. Mass engagement of citizens in online consultation and decision-making contexts remains an unsatisfied expectation, according to Scherer and Wimmer (2014). They argue that to identify and implement measures for increasing trust and minimising distrust in eParticipation endeavours,
relevant trust relationships have to be analysed to understand implications of using or not using eParticipation offers.

In summary, chapter 4 has explored the theoretical foundations of the thesis. There is the IS artefact theory advanced by Lee et al. (2015), which builds on the work of Orlikowski and Iacono (2001) and Bembasat and Zmud (2003), who recognised the IT artefact as essential in studies of information systems. Akhlaghpour et al. (2013) argued, however, for a need to conceptualise and theorise the IT artefact, including by studies providing explicit considerations and theoretical explanations of the IT artefact they analyse. Lee et al. (2015) charted a new path in this regard, providing a broader and more contextualised definition of the IS artefact, rather than taking the IT artefact as a standalone and the all-important aspect of an information system. Lee et al. (ibid) unpacked three constituent parts that make up the IS artefact, that is the information artefact, the social artefact, and the technological artefact. While showing how these constituent parts interact with and affect each other Lee and colleagues recommended fleshing out the political aspect of the IS, and that is a call this thesis is answering to. The thesis studies SNS use in participation, fleshing out the constitutive artefacts involved (including the political), and arguing for how they should interact for eParticipation to work. In addition, the CVM is used as a reference theory for this thesis, but also as an object for improvement. The CVM holds that individuals find the costs of participating low enough and the benefits high enough, when they are equipped with resources of time, money, and civic skills, and have a sense of psychological engagement with politics and current events. While the CVM is directly anchored in political participation, and has been commonly used in studies on political participation, it has also attracted some criticism, and my test of the theory in eParticipation in a developing country, authoritarian context, aims to establish its applicability and to suggest improvements to it.

From this chapter, it has also been apparent that research is not wholly in agreement about the effects of SNS use on participation. Whereas the majority of the research touts the positive link between ICT - notably SNS use - and participation, this chapter has presented literature that casts doubt on these claims, by either arguing that internet use can lead to a withdrawal from public life and therefore be detrimental to participation, or pointing to the differential effects of SNS use on eParticipation. Moreover, as this chapter has shown, the various models on eParticipation are all tentative proposals rather than universally accepted postulations, and there are often
weak relationships among models. Also emerging clearly is that successive implementation of eParticipation faces numerous challenges the world over. The increasing interest in role of social media in eParticipation for research and practice is also abundantly evident. In theory, eParticipation offers citizens a chance opportunity to acquire information and discuss policy or take part in some form of political deliberation or decision-making. But literature shows that there are few examples of sustained deliberation in eParticipation initiatives.
5. Summary of the Papers

The table below shows the research questions addressed by each paper and the key findings.

"Table 5: Research questions and key findings from the respective papers"

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Papers</th>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Key Findings</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Citizens’ use of new media in authoritarian regimes: A case study of Uganda</td>
<td>1) What is the connection between the way individuals participate online and offline in authoritarian regimes?; 2) What are the drivers of online participation among citizens in authoritarian regimes such as Uganda?</td>
<td>Common drivers of eParticipation, such as low cost, security and anonymity are hard to transplant into the offline world for citizens of authoritarian countries. Perceived risks of retribution and intimidation for expressing a particular opinion or supporting a political cause mean that citizen-to-citizen engagement is the predominant form but still at low levels, while citizen-to-government participation is negligible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: When Facebook use doesn’t trigger eParticipation: Case study of an African authoritarian regime</td>
<td>1) What effect does the use of Facebook have on the online political participation behaviours of individuals in an authoritarian state?; 2) What factors are important predictors of online participation among individuals who use Facebook in an authoritarian state?</td>
<td>Even for politically-inclined individuals, low belief in citizens’ online actions influencing change and fear of reprisals for criticising an authoritarian regime in power for 29 years, severely dulled the appetite for eParticipation. This high cost of participation means Facebook is growing citizens’ civic skills but it is hardly increasing online participation even for politically interested citizens. Thus, the Civic Voluntarism Model does not hold true in explaining the motivation for participation, in the Ugandan context.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Citizen-to-Citizen vs. Citizen-to-Government eParticipation in Uganda: Implications for Research and Practice</td>
<td>1. What is the difference between the way individuals engage online with other citizens and with political leaders?; 2. What are the key impediments to greater use of ICT by citizens to engage with political leaders and with other citizens?</td>
<td>Citizens see more benefit in engaging with other citizens than with leaders. For engagements among citizens and between citizens and leaders, most citizens fall in the categories of spectators and inactives. For effective eParticipation, a bigger number of Ugandan internet users need to become creators, conversationalists and critics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Enhancing Social Accountability Through ICT: Success Factors and Challenges</td>
<td>1. How has ICT changed citizens’ capability to participate in social accountability?; 2. What impact has technology had on the wellbeing of communities and citizens where there is monitoring of public services delivery using ICT?; and 3. What are success factors and key challenges to successful citizens’ monitoring of accountability and transparency of public services via ICT?</td>
<td>Relative to mainstream political processes, there is more incentive (such as less fear of reprisals) to take part in social accountability (and the benefits can be swift and accrue directly to citizens. The social accountability arena can potentially be a breeding ground for wider eParticipation activities as it gives citizens skills, confidence, and trust in expressing views to those in power via ICT.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.1 Paper 1: Citizens’ Use of New Media in Authoritarian Regimes: A Case Study of Uganda

This was the foundational study for the thesis. I investigated the connection between the way individuals participate online and offline in authoritarian, low-income countries, and the nature of eParticipation among citizens in such countries. The paper was anchored in eParticipation theory. In view of the debate of whether use of the internet and other ICT affect participation behaviour and how or if online participation affects or mirrors offline participation, this study aimed to establish an understanding of Ugandan internet users in this regard. A second track for inquiry was the drivers of eParticipation in the Ugandan context, an under-studied issue as I have noted earlier. These two questions were fundamental to setting the baseline knowledge on which subsequent inquiry by the thesis would be constructed. Based on a print questionnaire with 116 Internet users, paper 1 takes primary interest in ordinary Internet users.

The paper provides empirical evidence to some of the gaps in contemporary literature regarding the connection between online participation and offline participation in authoritarian contexts. The Internet was potentially subsidising participation as Weber and others had noted. But the appetite for participation was low; the fear of reprisals very high. The assertion by Chadwick (2006) and others about anonymity of the online world rendering individuals less accountable for their actions and feeling empowered to speak up against more powerful actors because of having less fear of punishment was negated in an environment of perceived and real state surveillance of citizens’ online actions. Ultimately, this paper shows that in authoritarian countries such as Uganda, the enablers of online participation, such as security and anonymity, cannot be translated into the offline world. The fear of retribution meant that citizen-to-citizen participation was low but more prevalent than citizen-to-government, which was negligible. These issues are central to contemporary discourse on eParticipation theory. In terms of informing further research for this thesis, this paper provided me with an understanding of why it was important for the eParticipation habits of Ugandans to change.
5.2 Paper 2: When Facebook Use Doesn’t Trigger eParticipation: Case Study of an African Authoritarian Regime

The second paper goes beyond inquiring into the use of ICT in general as was the case in paper 1. It focuses on social network sites, notably Facebook, the most popular SNS in Uganda. Numerous scholars have concluded that there is a correlation between use of SNS, particularly for news and information acquisition or community building, and the likelihood for eParticipation. Several scholars have researched into the ways in which the internet could enable and motivate participation (Holt et al., 2013; Afou xenidis, 2014; Zúñiga & Valenzuela, 2011; Bachmann et al., 2010; Gustafsson, 2012; Weber et al., 2003; Quintelier, 2008). Some researchers make the case that online communities could be translated into active offline actors or that SNS use positively affects participation (Cullen & Sommer, 2011; Bakker & de Vreese, 2011; Räsänen, 2008; Lee & Kim, 2012).

In this paper, I examine how the use of Facebook affects the participation behaviours of individuals active in political and interest organisations and those not active in organised politics. Through focus group discussions involving 56 Ugandans, I conclude that in low internet use, authoritarian contexts, the Civic Voluntarism Model’s postulation of the factors that explain political participation and the benefits SNS like Facebook brings to participation in Western democracies are turned on their head. Besides overwhelming detachment from politics, even for politically-inclined citizens, low belief in citizens’ online actions influencing change and fear of reprisals for criticising an authoritarian president in power for 29 years, severely dulled the appetite for eParticipation. Hence, Facebook was growing citizens’ civic skills but it was hardly increasing online participation even for politically interested citizens. The paper takes some important steps in understanding the context, manifestations, and challenges of using SNS such as Facebook and its effect on political participation. It helps with the construction of the thesis by showing that eParticipation is low not only with a wide range of ICT tools and services but in particular with Facebook, an SNS popular in Uganda, and which citizens in some authoritarian states have used to contribute to advance political agendas, including contributing to change of regimes during the Arab Spring. By looking at citizens in three categories – 1) individuals active in political organisations; 2) individuals active in interest organisations; and 3) individuals not active in organised politics - I generated an understanding of the effect of Facebook use on different stakeholders.
5.3 Paper 3: Citizen-to-Citizen vs. Citizen-to-Government eParticipation in Uganda: Implications for Research and Practice

The results from the first two papers found a great range of challenges to eParticipation and showed that, because of the challenges, few citizens were active in political participation. Paper 2 investigated different citizen types (those active in political parties or activist group and those who were not in any organised groups) for evidence of possible differences in the nature and extent of their participation habits. No notable difference was found. That brought me to paper 3, in which I decided to compare Citizen-to-Citizen (C2C) engagements with Citizen-to-Government (C2G) participation. If citizens found little value in dealing with unresponsive political leaders, perhaps they were more actively interacting with fellow ordinary citizens in ways that could advance political participation. There is a shortage of literature on the nature and results of eParticipation in Uganda and other African countries (Dombeu et al., 2015; Sika, 2015; Hellström, 2015; Gagliardone et al., 2015). Moreover, citizens in Uganda have become skeptical about their ability to impact political change (Hellström, 2015). The growing ICT use in Uganda could offer an avenue for addressing aspects of the country’s democracy deficit. However, numerous obstacles to eParticipation in Uganda have been identified by previous research, such as Hellström, 2015; Zanello & Maassen, 2011. This created the need for research to understand the nature and extent of, and obstacles to, online participation.

This paper compares C2C and C2G participation, examines the factors that hinder greater C2C and C2G online participation, and explores the implications for greater eParticipation in future. I conclude that for effective eParticipation, the majority of Ugandan internet users need to become more active as creators of online content, as well as conversationalists and critics. Results of this study show that regardless of whether it is engagements among citizens or between citizens and leaders, most citizens are spectators. Top reasons for not engaging with leaders were security concerns and the lack of trust in the engagement resulting into any change or citizens receiving a response to issues they raised.
5.4 Paper 4: Enhancing Social Accountability Through ICT: Success Factors and Challenges

The research into ICT-enabled social accountability such as through whistle-blowing was the last of studies conducted for this thesis, and was informed by the largely disappointing results of the first three studies – all of which showed that there were negligible online engagements between citizens and political leaders. This study was conducted to establish whether, in less political processes such as monitoring the quality of public services, more citizens were participating. This was in view of the results of the three earlier studies, which showed a disappointing state of eParticipation, even when viewed from different standpoints (e.g. C2C, C2G), and when examining different actors (activists, opposition supporters, government officials, ordinary citizens).

A narrative popular in contemporary literature suggests that ICT is playing a crucial role in lifting vulnerable populations out of poverty and increasing the presence of the marginalised in mainstream discourse (Gagliardone et al., 2015; Asimwe et al., 2013; Bertot, et al., 2012; Arpit, 2012; Baguma, 2014). However, this narrative, while popular in academic research and in reports by development organisations and ICT-for-Development (ICT4D) project implementers, often leaves numerous unanswered questions. These include whether ICT has indeed enabled inclusiveness and empowerment of citizens to participate in democratic processes. And if so, what was the role of ICT in achieving this end?

Transparency and accountability are key requirements in a democratic society that also empower citizens to participate in democratic governance (Reuben & Levy-Benitez, 2003; Bertot et al., 2012; Mgwebi 2011; Grönlund, 2010). Kuriyan et al. (2011) have observed that whether it is about using the power of crowds to monitor elections, educating citizens about how the government spends money on public service, or monitoring local and national government budgets, ICT tools have been used to shift the ways in which accountability and transparency are incorporated into public service delivery. In this paper, I investigated the utility, success and problematic factors of ICT initiatives that promote citizen participation in public accountability processes. The paper draws on three projects that use ICT to report public service delivery failures in Uganda, mainly in the education, public health, and the roads sectors. While presenting common factors hampering meaningful use of ICT for citizens’ monitoring of public services
and eParticipation in general, the paper studies the factors that enabled successful whistle blowing using toll free calling, blogging, radio talk shows, SMS texting, and e-mailing. The paper provides examples of the positive impacts of whistle-blowing mechanisms and draws up a list of success factors applicable to these initiatives as well as common challenges to programmes that use ICT to enable citizen participation in social accountability.

As I discuss in section 6.4, this paper shows, crucially, that unlike the three earlier studies, many citizens were taking part in ICT-enabled social accountability, and duty bearers were largely responsive to the issues citizens raised. Social accountability such as whistle-blowing on the quality of public services is therefore a breeding ground for wider eParticipation.
6. Summary of the Results

In this section, I present a summary of the results broken down along the four major studies that constitute this thesis. Each of the studies that make up this work systematically contributes to generation of new knowledge that adds up to the thesis. See Table 5 for the research questions and key findings from the respective papers. In this section, I present the results in line with the sub-questions addressed by the thesis.

6.1 Connection Between Online and Offline Participation

This section presents summary findings on the question: What is the connection between the way individuals participate online and offline in authoritarian countries? As shown in the literature review, and as is commonly assumed in eParticipation theory, there is a link between ICT use and participation, with uses such as news and information seeking, as well as involvement in community building such as online groups, increasing an individual’s likelihood to participate. Given the central need of the thesis to understand the motivations for eParticipation in authoritarian countries, it was essential to inquire into how or if online participation affects or mirrors online participation in such countries.

Respondents were asked about ten participative activities, in which sphere (offline or online) they were more likely to participate, and the reasons for their preference. Information seeking was preferred online by 66% of the respondents for its low cost, convenience, speed, and “wide array of information available”. Petitioning and seeking membership of a political group were the other activities with some preference for the online sphere (Table 6). Although there was preference for online participation relative to offline participation on a number of activities, there were some activities where respondents were equally comfortable participating offline or online. These were campaigning, discussing politics, and voting. Reasons for this included the lack or shortage of infrastructure to enable some activities (such as voting) and the relatively low retribution potential of the activities – voting is in secret so nobody knows who you voted for, while campaigning and discussing politics could only be with trusted friends and relatives so as to minimise the potential for retribution. For campaigning, the shortage of ICT infrastructure and poor ICT awareness made offline the preferred sphere. In a country where offline polling and voting is the default, some
citizens felt that online mechanisms could promote transparency and efficiency, and reduce election malpractice. Even though it was noted that online lobbying could be conducted speedily and was likely to reach more people, lack of trust in online systems was cited in preference for the offline alternative. Trust was also mentioned as lacking in making online donations.

There was no activity for which a majority expressed a preference for solely offline participation. Respondents who preferred offline spheres of engagement placed emphasis on interactivity and the ability to physically observe emotions and reactions. For communicating with political leaders, offline advocates contended that physical interaction built “bonds” between leaders and citizens and could result in quicker feedback. However, many preferred communicating with leaders online as it overcomes the barriers in physical location between leaders and citizens. Amongst those who felt that there was no difference whether one communicated with their leaders online or offline, one respondent said either way, “leaders may pretend to be busy” and not respond to citizens’ concerns. For protests, one said, “you can’t show emotion” online. This was complemented with “anger can’t be shown using words or pictures, physical action is the basis of a successful protest”. Security concerns were also cited, with online protest being reported as protecting one’s identity and avoiding tear gas, police brutality, and arrests. Other pro-online protest respondents said the activity was likely to reach a wider population when not isolated by physical location.

The anonymity enabled by the online world was a key motivation for participating online. But for 59% of respondents in this study, reasons for participation online did not motivate them to participate offline. Those who said the reasons for participating online similarly motivated them to participate offline were 41%. This group said participation online catalysed and complemented their participation in the offline world. Nonetheless, it was worth noting that some of the activities they were comfortable engaging in offline (such as voting and discussing politics) could be conducted in safety (e.g. voting by secret ballot or discussing politics with only trusted friends and family). This reinforces the importance of security as a motivator for people to participate, and this held true both offline and online.
Table 6: Respondents’ sphere preference (online or offline) for engaging in particular activities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Sphere preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Offline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussions/Deliberations</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information seeking</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaigning</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting/polling</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petitioning/lobbying</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising/donating</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating with leaders/politicians</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek membership of an organisation</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further, cost was cited by 71% of respondents, and fear of retribution in view of Uganda’s authoritarian regime by 67%, as reasons that stopped them from e-participating. Some cross-fertilisation between online and offline participation was noticed, with online participation complementing to offline engagement. For instance, information sourced online or in discussions attended in online forums (as preferred methods to attending rallies or visiting party offices) was used in discussing politics face-to-face. There were several impediments to eParticipation, with the fear of retribution a particularly prominent one that trumped motivations to participate.

6.2 Effects of Social Network Use on Political Participation

Following on from the findings of the first study, the second study zeroed in on SNS, notably Facebook, the second most popular website in Uganda after Google. It investigated the factors that are important predictors of online participation among individuals who use Facebook. This research was anchored on the Civic Voluntarism Model, which states that individuals are likely to participate once they are equipped with resources of time,
money, and civic skills; have a sense of psychological engagement with politics and current events; and have been recruited by someone in their environment to participate, such as a member of their social network. I asked about the factors advanced by this theory as motivators of participation.

6.2.1 Facebook as a Resource for Political Knowledge and Participation

Facebook was promoting access to political knowledge, including through providing access to news and information. Even individuals who did not personally visit news websites or the Facebook pages of news organisations received news and information through links forwarded to them, or viewed comments made on stories by their friends. Discussion forums on Facebook also increased the awareness, debating skills, and information seeking and sharing skills of those on Facebook, whether they were politically inclined or not. According to most FGD participants, by making it easier and more convenient to access news, receive and share information, observe or contribute to discussions, Facebook was helping to grow their civic and informational skills, and ultimately to increase their political knowledge. It was also saving them time and money so as to participate. Sharing news links and forwarding of news articles was widespread, although political news was among the categories least shared. Health, entertainment, and sports news were shared most. As one participant remarked, “I don’t send you a link on a topic to which I don’t know how you will respond. So I regularly share health news with all my friends and contacts because health is an issue relevant to everyone and it is unlikely that anyone will react negatively to a health story, which is not the same with stories related to politics.” Numerous respondents felt Facebook was helping them to gain writing, discussion, and argumentation skills from observing what others posted and fashioning their own arguments along what they considered quality arguments and discussions.

Using Facebook gave individuals a high possibility for improved political knowledge regardless of whether these individuals were interested or participating in political related activities. However, whether an individual Facebook user actually got increased political knowledge was largely dependent on variables such as the friends they had and the groups they subscribed to. Political knowledge gained by a person engaged in sports and entertainment groups, or who only shared family-related information with close associates, was lower than that of a person with membership to a political
group on Facebook. As such, Facebook was excellent for information acquisition and sharing but did not necessarily stimulate eParticipation.

I found that many Facebook users were taking to using newer social media tools such as Whatsapp, which they considered more private in some ways and which they claimed transmitted messages more instantaneously than Facebook. This was further driving many Ugandan social network users away from the political sphere and into the comfort zones of communicating only with known friends and associates whose telephone numbers they were sure of. In spite of these unfavourable sentiments about Facebook, much was said in its praise, including being platform-independent unlike WhatsApp which requires a user to have a phone, its suggestion of friends to users, enabling a user to reach a wide audience including those who are not his friend, and being more affordable. Below is a sample of comments from the focus group discussions.

- “Facebook is the choice medium for me. It enables me to see what others have commented on and then I can also decide whether to comment.”

- “Facebook is better than other social media because it suggests friends to you and so you can get more friends compared to say WhatsApp. For WhatsApp you need their number in order to converse with them, unlike Facebook.”

- “Facebook is cheaper than other social media. For WhatsApp you need a smart phone unlike Facebook where you can use a simple phone provided it is internet enabled. There is also Facebook zero which you can use even if you don’t have data.”

- “Facebook takes long to upload then post whereas WhatsApp is instant. And on WhatsApp when you send someone a message whether they want to read it or not they have to see it. Also with WhatsApp you can see if someone is online so it saves time. WhatsApp also has notification alerts when you receive a message.”
• “Facebook is more private than WhatsApp. If I sent you a voice message or a photograph on WhatsApp, it is easy for someone to come and see it because it is among your messages. But Facebook has the wall, timeline and message [features]. If you send me a message then it is a private so a third party won’t see it.”

• “There is no spam or junk mail on WhatsApp unlike Facebook. On Facebook someone sends you a clip and as soon as you open it, it goes viral on you.”

• “Whatsapp has a level of security because the person has to have your number to send you a message.”

6.2.2 Do Political Knowledge and Ease of Use Translate into Participation?
The ties and conversations generated online, the increased political knowledge enabled by the social network, and the ease of exchanging information, contacting leaders and taking part in discussions, were potentially positive predictors for participation. However, they had not in fact led to increased participation among a majority of the respondents. While all these factors could potentially stimulate participation, primarily in individuals who were members of political and civic organisations, other factors trumped this stimulation – notably fear of reprisals, little belief in the ability of ICT to cause change, and irresponsiveness of leaders. Ultimately, most respondents, including members of organised groups, did not become any more politically active as a result of using the social network.

6.3 Citizen-to-Citizen vs. Citizen-to-Government Participation
The first two studies found disappointing results on the nature and extent of participation – namely, few citizens were participating and in only a few activities involving mostly other ordinary citizens. I explored how ordinary citizens engaged online with other citizens on the one hand, and with political leaders on the other hand. Understanding the citizen-to-citizen and government-to-citizen participation could then help to devise motivations for greater participation in both, in spite of the current impediments to citizens’ eParticipation.
6.3.1 Usefulness of ICT for Citizen-Government Interactions

Some 88% of respondents agreed that it was faster, and more effective to use ICT for monitoring government programmes. In a separate question about the use of ICT to contact government officials, 68% of respondents agreed that ICT would make it easier to communicate with public officials; only 15% disagreed. These results showed a highly positive perception of the potential of ICT to enhance interactions between citizens and leaders. It followed then that when respondents were asked whether the use of ICT "makes monitoring of public services easier and simple", 78% agreed. However, only 31% of respondents had ever been involved in some kind of monitoring or reporting on government/public services delivery. This indicated a divergence between the positive perceptions most respondents held of ICT use and whether they went ahead to engage in ICT-enabled social accountability.

6.3.2 How Citizens Use ICT to Engage with Other Citizens

Respondents were asked about the ways and the regularity of engaging with other citizens on issues of national or community concerns using ICT. The activity on which citizens engaged most regularly with other citizens was posting social media updates to Facebook and Twitter, with 61% of respondents engaging in it always or often. This was followed by seeking information and news (59%), and commenting on other citizens’ posts (58%), as shown in Table 7. Least regular activities were writing in the local press (19%), participating in radio/TV debates such as live call-ins and SMS strips (21%), and participating in politics-related online discussions (27%).
Table 7: In what ways and how often do you use ICT to engage with other citizens on issues of community or national concern (social, political, economic, etc.)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of engagement with fellow citizens</th>
<th>Frequency of engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emailing information (including forwarding documents)</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posting social media updates (Facebook and Twitter)</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in politics-related online discussions</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilising via SMS</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in radio/TV debates (live call ins, SMS strips)</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing in the local press or community newsletters</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking information and news</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commenting on other’s posts</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending/Receiving text messages</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3.3 How Citizens Use ICT to Engage with Political Leaders
Table 8 shows that seeking information and news, and following duty bearers on Facebook and Twitter were the most frequent forms of citizens’ engagement with duty bearers. The activities infrequently participated in were live call-in and SMS strips on radio and TV debates, commenting on political websites, and participating in online discussion forums.
Table 8: In what ways and how often do you use ICT to engage with duty bearers on issues of community or national concern (social, political, economic)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of engagement with duty bearers</th>
<th>Frequency of engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email requesting information/documents</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following duty bearers on social media (Facebook and Twitter)</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging via social media (Facebook and Twitter)</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in online discussion forums with leaders/public officials</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in radio/TV debates (live call ins, SMS strips)</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commenting on political websites</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking information and news</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Regarding hindrances to greater use of ICT to engage with duty bearers, security concerns emerged top, followed by low confidence in receiving feedback and responses. I explore these hindrances in section 6.5.

6.4 Citizens’ Participation in ICT-Enabled Social Accountability

This section, which draws from paper 4, answers the question of how ICT has changed citizens’ capability to participate in social accountability, and what the success factors and key challenges are to successful citizens’ monitoring of quality of public services via ICT. As elaborated in section 3.4, the concept of social accountability is central to the idea of transparency and accountability (World Bank, 2004). Building on the first three studies, this fourth study aimed to establish whether there was a domain in which citizens were gainfully using ICT for engaging with political leaders and
other duty bearers. Quality of public services monitoring was selected as the focus.

The three initiatives studied work in a similar manner: they enable citizens to monitor and report service delivery failures through the use of a mix of ICT (toll free call centre, Facebook, FM radio, crowd-mapping platforms and mobile phone SMS). These initiatives have a core group of voluntary service delivery monitors known as rural monitors or Voluntary Social Accountability Committees (VSACs) who are trained in using ICT tools for social accountability. They in turn mobilise other citizens and take a lead role in interfacing between citizens, the project implementers and duty bearers. Some of the monitoring groups are provided with equipment such as cameras, mobile phones, laptops and bicycles to facilitate their work. Once a complaint is received, the project implementers make efforts to establish its authenticity, then take up the matter with the relevant duty bearers to remedy it. There are also physical community meetings where the issues raised are discussed and these also help the project implementers to create cordial working relationships between the monitors (ordinary citizens and VSACs) and the duty bearers.

6.4.1 Citizens’ Participation and Impact of ICT-Enabled Social Accountability

Results from the research on social accountability showed that exposure of corruption instances and service delivery failures had increased by use of ICT. For instance, at the call centre, the number of calls received that reported service delivery failures rose from about 20 per month in 2013 to an average of 50 per month in the second half of 2014. This was partly because of the ease of reporting; those who used a toll free line saved on telephone airtime as they would otherwise have needed to make a paid phone call, and they did not have to travel to an authority’s office to file a complaint. This was true for the toll free call centre and the TracFM tool, which allowed sending free mobile SMS into radio shows. Noticeably, the monitoring of social services (health, roads, education, and water) drew stronger interest from members of the community that felt they would get direct tangible benefits if leaders and service providers were held accountable. This was not the case with more traditional political participation activities, where incentives to participate were lower and where taking part in demanding accountability could draw reprisals from authorities.
Findings also showed that responses to incidents reported via ICT were quicker and more positive relative to other reporting mechanisms in place. This was attributed to reporting cycles that enabled speedy delivery of service failure reports to higher authorities that would have been hard or impossible to reach by ordinary citizens, and the traceable trail which the reporting mechanism often left behind – for instance, time stamps on emails sent to officials and photographic evidence of service delivery failures (e.g. a photo of a broken bridge, a dry water well, patients seated at a health centre in mid-morning with no health staff present to attend to them). Building the civic skills as well as ICT skills of citizens was identified as crucial by project implementers and users of complaints systems.

6.4.2 Success Factors and Challenges for ICT-for-Social Accountability Initiatives

From the research described in Paper 4, the major success factors and challenges that emerged are summarised in the table 9 below. The factors presented here are my interpretation based on interviews and observations.
Table 9: Success factors and challenges for ICT-for-social accountability initiatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success Factors</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Provide timely feedback to users of the ICT system and to the affected community</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Elevation of issues beyond local level, e.g. to national newspapers and to more senior duty bearers than those being monitored</td>
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<tr>
<td>Raise civic awareness, informational skills and ICT literacy among the user community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Build citizens’ skills to use the tools in use e.g. digital photography, using crowd-sourcing platforms, social media or TracFM</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Civil society (NGOs, CBOs) work as infomediaries and interlocutors between citizens and duty bearers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use technology appropriate to the community: SMS, the crowd-mapping platform Ushahidi, simple cameras, Facebook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability, affordability, simplicity, suitability of ICT are key</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blend in traditional media e.g. radio which provide for local language, interaction (talk show speakers), calls-in (remote participation), wide reach and elevation of complaints. Physical community meetings a good addition too.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure anonymity, security, safety of users and their data if revealing their identities could attract reprisals</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Enable interactivity and have both push and pull features</td>
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<tr>
<td>Free or affordable services – e.g. toll free lines, TracFM, social media at free community access centres</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Challenges</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low spread of ICT infrastructure, poor internet speeds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of electricity in some communities and rampant electricity outages even where there are connections</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Choosing ICT tools not suited to the local environment</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Deficiency of localised tools: tools and systems predominantly in English language which many ordinary citizens do not understand</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low facilitation for voluntary accountability monitors— cameras, transportation, monetary compensation, writing materials, internet connections</td>
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<tr>
<td>High costs of accessing, owning and sustaining ICT tools and services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of ICT that does not enable the provision of feedback and easy interactivity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High levels of basic and ICT illiteracy added to complexity of using ICT</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentivising members of the community to regularly monitor service delivery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The digital divide – e.g. geographical, literacy, income, gender, age.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lack of trust in ICT or in an organisation delivering the service</td>
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</tbody>
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6.5 What Hampered Increased Citizen Engagement Online?

A number of key hindrances to increased political participation emerged during the studies. Paper 3 particularly explored these issues at length, and found that the main factors that most hindered greater use of ICT to engage with fellow citizens included illiteracy (cited by 66% of respondents), language (62%), cost (59%), and lack of awareness of availability of tools. Sixty-nine percent of respondents stated that security concerns did not hinder use of ICT for engagement with citizens. These results largely mirror the low literacy and income levels in Uganda, low ICT access rates and the high costs of using the internet. Regarding hindrances to greater use of ICT to engage with duty bearers, security concerns emerged top at 61%, followed by low confidence in receiving feedback and responses (45%). Cost emerged as the third factor, but was cited by only 38% of respondents, whereas it was prominently cited by 59% of respondents as an impediment to citizen-to-citizen interactions.

In mostly paper 2 and 3, I examined at length the question of why individuals did not participate even when their political knowledge had grown, they had the resources to enable their participation, and also had the time to participate. Below I explore the most prominent reasons:

6.5.1. Fear of Reprisals

One of the democratising effects of ICT is that it enables citizens to participate remotely and anonymously with minimal fear of reprisals (Chadwick 2006; Weber et al., 2003). In Uganda, for many citizens social media is a no-go zone politically, precisely because of fear of being traced and attracting reprisals. This fear is rooted in a number of recent developments, such as the announcement in March 2013 that the government would form a social media monitoring centre, stories in mainstream newspapers that security agencies were seeking to establish the identity of popular Facebook users who were critical of government, and revelations by Facebook that Ugandan authorities had asked for the identity of Facebook account holders – requests the company turned down (CIPESA, 2014). Respondents reported that they regularly practiced self-censorship on Facebook, which had a chilling effect on their online participation. Several “taboo topics”, namely the ones Facebook users thought would attract reprisals from the government, were identified. They included the restoration of presidential term limits which were scrapped in 2005 at President Museveni’s bidding; the retirement of President Museveni who has been in power for 30 years;
whether Museveni’s son who has risen swiftly through army ranks will succeed him as the country’s president; debate on the country’s tough anti-homosexuality law; deployment of Ugandan forces in conflicts in countries such as Somalia and South Sudan; corruption at high levels of government; and military spending.

6.5.2. Little Belief in Ability of ICT to Cause Change
There was little belief that using ICT and Facebook in particular could help cause change. Most respondents knew that many duty bearers had Facebook accounts but said the officials’ accounts were largely dormant: the duty bearers rarely posted anything and only a tiny minority ever responded to questions posed to them, or contributed to debates in online forums. Moreover, many respondents believed that the Facebook accounts in the names of politicians and other duty bearers were mostly managed by hired people whose mandate rarely included engaging in debates or making commitments via social media. The duty bearers themselves, it was believed, lacked the skills or the interest to be active on Facebook. As one respondent put it, “Responses from leaders would be an incentive for me to participate in political issues. Leaders don’t respond so people give up. It’s the same way if you are my friend on Facebook and I say hello and you do not respond, I will not bother you again.”

6.5.3. Politics Sucks – and Facebook is a Social not a Political Network
Many social media users stated that they were attracted to joining Facebook for purposes of socialising not political participation, and they still consider it a social, not political, tool. As one respondent put it, “We joined Facebook to communicate with friends; other uses are just coming in.” For such users, old habits die hard; they started using Facebook because it satisfied their need and interest in communicating social issues with family and friends. Such individuals – generally those not involved in activist or political groups – may initiate conversations, upload pictures, share stories, and participate in group discussions. However, all this is of a social rather than a political nature and it directly serves personal causes and derives personal benefit rather than for the community.
Below are some quotes on this issue:

- “There is little interest in politics. Most people don’t want to comment on politics yet as a user you want your Facebook page to be active with users’ comments so you go for a topic that will attract comments, that is entertainment or social issues.”

- “I have no hope in political processes. Many things have been promised but not done. Even if I comment, what will it change? So I decide not to comment.”

- “Most Facebook users are youths whose main interest is entertainment. Politics is not of interest to them. Even adult users usually use it for entertainment and showing off their children and social lives.”

- “There are people that are not interested in certain topics like politics. So they will ‘pass’ instead of commenting or participating in any way if they see it is about politics. Most people just go there (on Facebook) to chat with friends.”

6.5.4. Limited Skills, Time and Money

According to the study conducted in 2015, data costs are high, with 1 GB of data going for US$12 in a country where 30.7% live on less than US$1.25 a day. The high data costs mean many users, particularly those with limited incomes, prioritize what they do online. Only 18% of Ugandans are connected to electricity, which often forces internet cafés to shut down or mobile phones to be off because their batteries cannot be charged. Furthermore, given that about 49% of the Ugandan users of Facebook were in the 18-24 age group, an age at which many are still in school or otherwise struggling to earn a living, they have limited disposable income to channel into buying data or buying surfing time at an internet café. Many of those using Facebook only used a few basic features. As one participant put it, “Many Facebook users only know how to search for friends and to update their status. They are Facebook tourists not users. They know nothing about hashtags and searching for pages.”
From Chapter 6, we have seen that the anonymity enabled by the online world was a key motivation for participating online, but for the majority, motivations for participation online did not equally motivate offline participation. There were numerous impediments to eParticipation, with the fear of retribution a particularly prominent one. Regarding the use of Facebook and its effect on online participation, I found that the ties and conversations generated on Facebook, the increased political knowledge enabled by using this SNS, and the ease of exchanging information, contacting leaders and taking part in discussions, were potentially positive predictors for participation. However, while using Facebook gave individuals a high possibility for improved political knowledge regardless of whether these individuals were interested or participating in political related activities, using the social network had not led to increased participation among a majority of the respondents. There were more engagements among citizens, while interactions between citizens and duty bearers were much less. Regarding hindrances to greater use of ICT to engage with duty bearers, security concerns emerged top, followed by low confidence in receiving feedback and responses. However, in the area of ICT-enabled social accountability, notably quality of public services monitoring, more citizens were participating, and duty bearers were often responsive. The motivations for this participation in social accountability could be leveraged to improve wider eParticipation, as I discuss in the next Chapter, particularly sections 7.3 and 7.6.

6.6 SNS as IS Artefacts

This thesis took an interest in the suitability of Facebook as a platform for political participation, in spite of many users considering the SNS a primarily social (not political) medium, as discussed in section 6.5.3. This discussion centred on the features of Facebook that could enable users to e-participate and how these functionalities compared to those of other commonly used SNS, which for most respondents turned out to be WhatsApp. To recap the discussion in section 4.4.2 on features of SNS that enable participation, the way these technologies are assembled also has an impact on how they are used (Johannessen & Munkvold, 2012). For instance, by joining a Facebook group, users interact with other group members and share information with ease and speed (Chu, 2011), which allows for multi-directional conversations. Valenzuela et al. (2009) observed that it was not clear what specific features of Facebook use produced individual-level social capital, while Park et al. (2009) argued that Facebook groups were a particularly
popular application that supported unique forms of social interaction and generated discussions based on common interests. Robertson et al. (2010) identified various technical features of Facebook that were particularly conducive to social interaction, while Johannessen and Munkvold (2012) identified the eParticipation capabilities of Facebook.

Technologically, SNS are human-centred tools that enable individuals to easily exchange information, co-create, and interact with other individuals, take part in conversations, and be part of building communities of common interest. Therefore, SNS such as Facebook, as well systems such as call centres, are inherently embedded with the technology artefact. As defined by Lee et al. (2015), the raison d’être for a technology artefact is to be used to solve a problem, achieve a goal or serve a purpose that is human defined, human perceived or human felt. Besides manifesting the technology artefact, SNS by their nature are an equalising technology, or a liberating technology in terms of the political relationships they enable. These SNS enable ordinary citizens to speak up to authority and they are unlike technologies which, according to Winner (1980), enhance the power, authority, and privilege of some over others. In terms of eParticipation, Facebook in particular is a suitable, due to its design features such as a list of friends, linear threaded discussion forum (or “wall”), threaded discussion forums, status updates, news postings, and information sharing (Robertson et al., 2010). Groups that enable a user to interact with other group members and share information with ease and speed (Chu, 2011) are amenable to eParticipation too. Thus, among other participation activities, Facebook enables consultation, petitions, and activism (Johannessen & Munkvold, 2012). In my studies, it was apparent that Facebook was promoting access to political knowledge, including through providing access to news and information. I also found that Facebook discussion forums increased citizens’ awareness of current affairs, and raised the debating skills, and information seeking and sharing skills of users of this social network. Moreover, SNS allow ordinary citizens to disseminate private opinions in multi-directional conversations, to comment on others’ posts, and to pose questions to duty bearers.

However, the monitoring by state agents of citizens’ communications on Facebook had a suffocating effect on free expression and eParticipation in Uganda. There was therefore limited exploitation of the potential of Facebook for eParticipation. Nonetheless, it was evident that Facebook had the constituent elements of the IS artefact – although the state of eParticipation in Uganda dictated that some of these ‘sub-artefacts’ were suppressed relative to others. The information artefact was undermined by the fact that few
citizens made political comments, started conversations, or asked political leaders questions on Facebook. The political artefact was undermined by low levels of interaction between citizens and leaders, and because few organisations worked through SNS to promote online political participation. For a detailed exploration of the IS artefact in SNS, see section 7.5.
7. Discussion

In this section, I analyse the key findings, using the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM), some concepts from IS theory and eParticipation theory as references. The discussion is forward-looking as it explores how, in spite of the low state of eParticipation and the various challenges ranged against increased online participation, bigger numbers of Ugandans can nonetheless be motivated to participate online. To guide the discussion, I revisit the research question: How can social media contribute to increased political participation in an authoritarian state? This question is explored through four inter-linked studies that address such questions as the connection between the way individuals participate online and offline in authoritarian countries; factors that are important predictors of online participation among individuals who use Facebook in an authoritarian state; the difference between the ways individuals engage online with other citizens and with political leaders; and success factors and challenges to successful citizens’ monitoring of quality of public services via ICT.

I start with a discussion of whether access to “resources” as envisaged in the CVM does in fact stimulate participation in citizens, as was argued by the proponents of this theory. I then discuss why eParticipation is not working in Uganda and why that is not surprising. But there is hope still, as I discuss in section 7.3 on ‘Social Accountability as a Breeding Ground for eParticipation’. Following on that, I below show how the CVM falls short of explaining online participation in authoritarian contexts such as Uganda and suggest ways to make it more applicable. The next section discusses what constitutes IS artefact, in particular what constitutes the political, informational, social and technological artefacts in SNS when used in eParticipation. Finally, I suggest ways in which, in spite of the poor state of eParticipation that I detail through much of the thesis, more citizens can still be motivated to participate.

7.1 Does Access to Resources Stimulate Participation?

A basic premise of the CVM, and one that is prevalent in the eParticipation literature, holds that access to the internet and other ‘resources’ such as time, money and civic skills, boosts the proclivity for an individual to participate. Similarly, it is commonly stated in eParticipation theory that there is a link between ICT use and participation, with uses such as news and information seeking, and involvement in community building such as online
groups, associated with increased likelihood for an individual to participate. My research found high proficiency in using ICT among the study participants, regular access to the internet, and for some, membership in online political groups. But this did not translate into participation for the greater majority. Furthermore, ICT was enabling individuals to access a wide range of information and offering them a possibility to participate in online discussions. But the use of ICT had resulted, for the main part, in increased contacts among citizens and in most cases it boosted family relations and work processes as opposed to civic and political participation. Even for the most active online citizens (both registered and non-registered party members), the range and nature of activities they engaged in was limited. I found that for Ugandan citizens with limited interest in politics, living under an authoritarian regime where critical opinion can attract reprisals, having access to the Internet and civic knowledge rarely translates into eParticipation. My findings are consistent with those in authoritarian Iran (Wojcieszak & Smith, 2013), which showed that most connected citizens were not using the Internet for political processes but to discuss personal topics and work-related affairs. Moreover, majority of Iranian citizens had greater confidence in new media empowering them personally rather than making governmental officials more responsive (Wojcieszak et al., 2012).

In Uganda, it was notable that the same individuals that shunned online participation in political issues often used ICT for a range of other activities that would deliver direct, immediate, and personal gratifications. Many used the internet to read news, place sports bets, announce on Facebook the parties they attended at the weekend. Such individuals also used the internet for online research, listening to music or downloading movies, reading news and eBooks, carrying out online banking, and eLearning. This showed that personal (rather than community) interests are the major driver for most individuals’ online activity. Furthermore, the possibility for an action leading to immediate and tangible results emerged as a consideration for individuals’ online participation.

There were also notable differences in the way individuals related with other citizens and with leaders. For C2C engagements, posting social media updates was the most pursued activity, followed by seeking information and news, emailing information (including forwarding documents), and commenting on other citizens’ posts. The least interest was paid to writing in the local press, participating in radio/TV debates such as live call-ins and SMS strips, and participating in politics-related online discussions. There
was much less engagement between citizens and leaders. Seeking information and news, and following duty bearers on Facebook and Twitter were the most frequent forms of citizen engagement with duty bearers. Worth noting is that these activities are unlikely to expose one to reprisals or even to show their stand on a political issue. Many citizens therefore had trust that they could engage in them without compromising their safety. It was also telling that commenting on political websites and participation in online discussion forums with leaders, were among activities less frequently participated in. Thus, where in C2C we see more actively engaged citizens (posting SNS updates, seeking and sharing information, commenting on other citizens’ posts), in C2G the citizens tend to be spectators or followers, engaging on fewer ICT platforms and in less active areas.

These findings show a desire to engage with the leaders on the one hand and, on the other, citizens’ detachment from leaders and from politics. The reasons for not engaging were telling too: with leaders it was security concerns first, then lack of trust in the engagement resulting into any change or citizens receiving a response to issues they raised; and third, was cost. With C2C, security concerns were less prominent – in fact, 69% stated that security concerns did not hinder their engagement with other citizens. On balance, the fears and frustrations that citizens in an authoritarian country have outweigh the benefits of eParticipation. In many instances, these fears are not lived but are based on perceptions or the experiences of others. The sum total of this is that if these fears are not addressed, the great majority of Ugandans, including those with ample access to ICT, and who are aware of the benefits of online participation, will for many years remain out of the fold of eParticipation. Moreover, for as long as leaders remain unresponsive to issues raised by citizens, and provided citizens have a fear of reprisals for expressing opinions online, eParticipation will remain minimal, in particular as concerns the C2G relations.

7.2 eParticipation is not Working: Implications for Practice
This research found that ICT has enabled only a fraction of connected Ugandans to participate and they are doing this in few domains, and rarely do political leaders engage with citizens. The much-touted benefits of eParticipation in amplifying voices and raising civic awareness as advanced by Subhajyoti (2012), Arpit (2012), and Woro & Supriyanto (2013) or enabling citizens to articulate democratic ideas, were hardly visible in Uganda. And with few citizens engaging with political leaders, ICT is not living up
to its potential to raise government transparency and accountability, to promote human rights monitoring, and to accelerate information flows between citizens and leaders. As it is, eParticipation is not working in Uganda, and I did not really expect it to be. Even in countries with a longer democratic tradition, higher education and ICT use levels, such as Western Europe, eParticipation struggles - a lot – and it often fails.

At one level, it would be expecting too much to be optimistic about eParticipation working in Uganda at the moment – with the low democratic culture, an authoritarian regime, and a citizenry that has low belief in their ability to change the status quo, particularly via ICT. But at another level, it could be legitimately conceivable that because of the limited avenues for offline participation and free expression, citizens would jump into the online world as a platform for unfettered engagement and participation. After all, there is considerable recent research on how citizens in some authoritarian countries have used ICT to circumvent state controls on information and therefore been able to do citizen organising for social and political change. Furthermore, as argued by the equity-fairness theories, groups that feel they cannot get their voices heard through conventional political participation are more likely to vent their frustrations in other types of political participation (Phelps, 2006), which in this case could include the online sphere.

This contention by Phelps could have held true in Uganda given the desire by citizens to find alternative (such as online) types of political participation. However, that desire has been upended due to increased government witch-hunt of social media critics, declining civic space in the offline world, higher apathy among citizens, and low trust in the security of ICT tools. This means that in an environment where citizens have no trust in their anonymity and security being assured by the channels of participation, they will be disinclined to participate even if they want to vent their political frustrations. In these circumstances, the CVM would be insufficient to explain motivation for participation or non-participation by Ugandans. The equity-fairness theories would similarly fail.

Some of the major reasons hampering eParticipation in Uganda, cited by previous research (e.g. Hellström, 2015; Zanello & Maassen, 2011), such as high cost and low trust, were corroborated by my research. Other common factors cited in the literature related to accessibility, affordability, and illiteracy were also borne out by my research. The place of unresponsive government officials, fear of reprisals, and self-censorship are not well articulated or studied in the previous literature but emerged as major impediments to eParticipation, notably by those for whom access and ICT
skills were not problematic. A fear of reprisals was entrenching a widespread culture of self-censorship, previously reported on by Gagliardone et al. (2015), CIPESA (2012), and Laverty (2012), and this was further negating participation.

No doubt, the internet was potentially subsidising participation as Weber et al. (2003) had envisaged. But the appetite for participation was low; the fear of reprisals very high. The assertion by Chadwick (2006) and others about anonymity of the online world rendering individuals less accountable for their action and feeling empowered to speak up against more powerful actors because they have less fear of punishment was negated in an environment of perceived and real state surveillance of citizens’ online actions. It is my contention then that some eParticipation literature overestimates the link between using ICT (particularly social media) and participation both offline and online. This could partly be explained by the fact that majority of literature is not on authoritarian regimes. In contexts where many such studies are conducted individuals for whom the cost of participation is lowered by ICT and have no fear of reprisals, have a high possibility of participating offline and online. In heavily-entrenched repressive regimes such as Uganda’s, where the president maintains tight control over the ruling party and the army and where opposition groups are much weaker, citizens have little belief in their ability to cause change, whether through offline or online actions. Even for citizens that regularly use the Internet, are politically aware and have membership to online political groups, eParticipation is not top of their online agenda. Rather, such individuals spend more time on activities that are safe and bring tangible, direct benefits to themselves, and so they relate more with friends and family compared to politicians or those they share political beliefs with.

For effective eParticipation, the majority of Ugandan internet users need to become more active as creators of online content, and as conversationalists and critics. Regardless of whether it is engagements among ordinary citizens or between citizens and leaders, most citizens are inactive, and either they are spectators or engage in passive activities on the outside or at the periphery of mainstream political processes. Only a few citizens fall in the active participation category yet these would be the ones to push most of the needed citizen-to-government participation that would enhance good governance. Without larger number of Ugandans using ICT, a decline in offline repression, more government folk using ICT and a diminishing of the fear of online snooping on citizens, it is unlikely the eParticipative habits of Ugandans under the current regime will change.
7.3 Social Accountability as a Breeding Ground for eParticipation

The fourth of the studies that make up this thesis was conducted to establish whether, in less political processes such as monitoring the quality of public services, more citizens were participating. Notably, the results showed that whereas only a fraction of citizens were participating in social accountability efforts, for most of them their participation was enabled by ICT. Moreover, the social accountability work was scoring results directly attributable to the technological mediums they used (See more on the results in section 6.4). Technology had helped in growing the civic and informational skills of some ordinary citizens, notably those who were members of social accountability committees. The resultant civic agency in the communities had in turn made leaders and duty bearers more responsive to citizens’ concerns. The overall social accountability efforts had thus positively impacted on the communities, as evidenced in the services that were being delivered appropriately and more swiftly following social accountability efforts. Since duty bearers (such as political leaders, education and health services providers) were aware that citizens were keeping them under watch and had the possibility to report on service delivery failures to numerous citizens and, particularly to higher authorities, the duty bearers became keen to do right even when the monitors were not looking.

Social accountability is not as risky as mainstream political participation since it comes with lower possibility for attracting reprisal. It is therefore more possible to implement social accountability even in authoritarian states, where there may be a high intolerance of critical opinion and opposition politics but a high tolerance for corruption. Moreover, there are more incentives to take part in social accountability as the benefits can be swift and accrue directly to citizens. A bridge repaired which enables farmers to take their produce to the market, a maternity ward built, a health centre stocked with drugs and whose nurses are always present at their duty station, a school where the management committee sits regularly and does not squander development funds, all directly benefit citizens. The incentive for citizens to take part in social accountability towards achieving these objectives is therefore likely to be higher than participation in mainstream political processes (e.g. campaigning for a candidate in a national election, joining a movement opposing the president’s intention to stand for re-election, speaking out about corruption in the central government). Additionally, I
found that citizens considered that it took less time, effort, and skill to engage in this kind of whistle-blowing relative to participation in more mainstream political processes. The social accountability arena can thus potentially be a breeding ground for wider eParticipation activities. This is because by engaging in social accountability, the resulting civic agency that grows in citizens, the trust they gain in using ICT for public good, the confidence they gain through speaking out to those in positions of authority, all augur well for such citizens’ future online political participation.

It is important, however, to understand the elements that made whistle-blowing successful if these elements are to be replicated in wider eParticipation in contexts similar to Uganda. The ICT-enabled public accountability initiatives had impact in terms of eliciting action from duty bearers. Responses to incidents reported via ICT were quicker and more positive relative to other reporting mechanisms in place. Exposure of corruption instances and service delivery failures had increased by use of ICT, with toll free tools aiding the increased reporting. The feedback citizens received on issues they reported cultivated trust among them to keep using the digital platforms to monitor and report service delivery failures. As for project implementers, they were able to identify indicators of success from their social accountability work: communities that were empowered and proactively engaged with duty bearers to address service delivery failures; minority and underserved communities given voice to air out their concerns; services delivered when they are supposed to be delivered and to satisfactory levels. Other notable success indicators were growth in civic agency among citizens, seen when the community itself takes the initiative to repair roads or build classrooms; and duty bearers becoming more cooperative with promoters of complaint mechanisms. The expectation that issues reported would be acted upon (feedback provided, poor service issues resolved) and the little time and effort expended to whistle-blow were key motivators for participation. Indeed, many of these factors relate to those identified by Peixoto and Fox (2016) as key to successful ICT platforms that project citizens’ voice to improve public services delivery, namely disclosure of feedback and of responses to issues raised by citizens, the modality for voicing concerns, institutional responsiveness, and offline actions taken in order to encourage government responsiveness.
7.4 Applicability of the Civic Voluntarism Model

As I explained in section 4.1, this thesis treats the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) both as a reference for analysing my findings and as an object for improvement. In providing a frame of analysis, it did a good job. But the model has not turned out to be wholly applicable in the Ugandan context. In this section, I discuss where it fell short. Specifically, the determination by Verba and colleagues that resources and engagement are the most important factors in determining whether the benefits of civic participation outweigh the costs does not seem to hold in as far as it falls short of pinpointing factors such as fear of reprisals and political apathy. The internet has been said to subsidise the costs of participation (Weber et al., 2003; Moy & Xenos, 2007). Furthermore, proponents of the positive influence of internet use on participation, like Bakker and de Vreese (2011) and Zúñiga et al. (2012), contend that media use related to information acquisition, such as news and online communities has a positive impact on civic participation.

This research found that the use of SNS has a great possibility to increase political knowledge. Similarly, SNS use offers a possibility to mobilise support for political causes, while also supporting individuals to seek information and to participate in debates at affordable cost and with relative ease. However, the use of Facebook and other SNS does not necessarily stimulate participation in persons that are not interested in politics, nor does it inevitably raise the level of participation among individuals that are already active in civic or political groups. One of the primary determinants of an individual’s participation is the interest they have in politics, but this is often mediated by their ability to participate (i.e. the skills they have to enable them to participate via SNS), their level of access to SNS (i.e. resources such as having a smart phone or money to purchase data) and their ability to create time to participate. This thesis corroborated, in a way, the assertion by scholars like Klofstad (2009) that it is when the costs are low and the benefits high that people participate. In the Ugandan context, however, the high cost firstly includes the fees for acquiring an internet-enabled device and buying time at an internet café or purchasing data. Low incomes, high illiteracy rates, and the poor spread of the internet make this cost high.

Secondly, the cost, in a way which Klofstad, Gustafsson (2012), and proponents of the CVM did not discuss, also includes the possible reprisals that a person believes using ICT for political purposes can result into: the higher the likelihood and the more severe the reprisals are likely to be, the higher the cost of participating correspondingly goes up, and in turn, the less likely
an individual is to participate. This research found that interest in politics was extraordinarily low, partly because of apathy resulting from low belief in the possibility for individuals’ actions to influence change. The specific Ugandan context, with a president in power for three decades, who allegedly rigs elections, stifles independent voices by media, the political opposition and ordinary citizens, all contributed to making the appetite for participation low and the cost high.

Verba et al. (1995) suggested that individuals need to have a sense of psychological engagement with politics and current events and to have been recruited by someone in their social network in order to participate. Besides the overwhelming detachment from politics that I saw among the respondents, even for those individuals that were interested in politics, being members of political parties or other civic organisations, the fear of reprisals and non-engagement online by a significant number of Ugandans - both citizens and leaders - dulled these politically-inclined individuals’ appetite for online participation. This, in turn, supported assertions by Bimber (2003) that the political effects of new media use are contingent on individuals’ levels of sophistication, motives, as well as social context. Interest and cost trump skills possession and all the merits that ICT enables - including increased political knowledge - as determinants of an individual’s participation. Politics lies down the pecking order in a society with high political apathy, non-responsive leaders, low cost of living ranged against high internet costs, and widespread self-censorship. In this Ugandan context, many of the benefits that social media is believed to bring in Western democratic societies, and which the CVM suggests as the incentives for participation, are thus turned on their head.

While the CVM has been widely used, there has also been criticism of its completeness and applicability. Phelps (2006) criticised the model for missing any understanding of why individuals have no such incentives as it advances as the motivators for participation, which explains why they do not participate. Phang and Kankanhalli (2005) argued that the proposition that more resources will lead to higher participation is questionable, as studies showed that participation had been declining despite the general rise of living standards. Rubenson (2000) argued that the step from having resources to participating in politics was not apparent. The idea at the centre of the model is that resources facilitate participation. But I argue that the CVM does not sufficiently address the factors that stop participation even when the resources are available. It is not a novel criticism, as it has been raised by Zavadskaya and Welzel (2013), Pattie et al. (2004) and Phang and
Kankanhalli (2005). But these critics did not sufficiently go beyond criticising to establishing possible factors that would explain non-participation even when the requisite resources were in place. I have explained some of these factors in an authoritarian country context, such as such as the effect of fear of reprisals and political apathy.

Meanwhile, Zavadskaya and Welzel (2013) argued that theories such as CVM which emphasise the resource basis of participation ignore the psychological motivators of such participation. Rubenson (2000) observed that the elements of this theory may indeed be necessary for political participation to take place but they are not a sufficient explanation. As Rubenson (ibid) correctly argued, even if people possess the resources they still may be non-participants, as these resources may not be sufficient for participation to take place. Rubenson argued that there were a number of possible reasons why people who have the resources, the engagement and recruitment, did not participate. The political institutions, “the setting where political participation takes place” may be such that they do not readily allow for high levels of participation, he contended. In this thesis, I argue that citizens can have a high motivation, superb means to participate, and also be connected to recruitment networks, but still have little likelihood to participate. This, indeed, is the situation I found among a large number of respondents. I argue therefore that the goals and motivations of individuals – which vary from individual to individual and may not be the same among ordinary citizens and activists – are another crucial factor which the CVM does not adequately address.

7.5 Reflection on the IS Artefact, Including the Political Artefact

As articulated in section 4.3, this thesis explores SNS as an IS artefact, including individuals’ motivation for using it and the benefits of its use in participation, which are central areas in IS study. This builds mostly on the work of Lee et al. (2015), who pose the concept of the ‘IS artefact’, unpacking what has been called the IT artefact into a separate ‘information artefact’, ‘technology artefact’ and ‘social artefact’. These scholars consider a technology artefact to be a human-created tool whose raison d’être is to be used to solve a problem, achieve a goal or serve a purpose that is human defined, human perceived or human felt. They define the information artefact as “an instantiation of information, where the instantiation occurs through a human act either directly (as could happen through a person’s
verbal or written statement of a fact) or indirectly (as could happen through a person’s running of a computer program to produce a quarterly report).” Meanwhile, the social artefact is defined as consisting of, or incorporating, relationships or interactions between or among individuals through which an individual attempts to solve one of his or her problems, achieve one of his or her goals or serve one of his or her purposes.

The results of my thesis show that proper alignment of the different kinds of sub-systems or ‘sub-artefacts’ that make up the IS artefact is necessary for participation to work well. The prohibitive socio-political situation in Uganda, for instance, means that what is technically working fine does not necessarily work socially because of the repressive environment. I explain, as an example, how it went in the social accountability cases I studied in paper 4. First, the information artefact. The information handled through the reporting systems (e.g. the toll free call centre or on Facebook pages such as Stop Health Workers Absenteeism) was on quality of public services, an issue of concern to citizens who made complaints, as well as to duty bearers and to the intermediaries who implemented the whistle-blowing systems. Besides the reports on service delivery failures made by citizens, the information provided as feedback, or discussion of such issues on social media, were also part of the information artefact. Regarding the technological artefact, the services (toll free call centres, crowd-maps, Facebook), by their design enabled anonymous whistle-blowing that was free of charge to the citizen, and made it possible for the managers of information systems to receive information and complaints swiftly and in the complete form as made by citizens. Also part of the technological aspect were features of Facebook or the toll free centre that enabled citizens to make complaints and for system implementers to receive such information, store it, and analyse it. For example, the toll free system allows managers to capture the number of the caller so they can follow up to receive additional information or to provide feedback. It also allows them to analyse trends such as where most complaints originate from, main issues reported, and status of complaints.

It should be noted that in principle it was possible but in practice it was not desirable to use the systems such as call centres and the Facebook accounts of the whistle-blowing initiatives to serve a more political purpose (e.g. discussing why the head of state had to be replaced at the next election or why Uganda’s military should not be serving in Somalia, the Central African Republic and South Sudan). Instead, they were deliberately utilised to address service delivery failures, in the specific sectors of health, education, water and roads. At one level, even without making mainstream politics the
focus of attention, this marked such systems as liberating technologies since they enabled citizens to speak out to or about those with power. Ordinary citizens are enabled by SNS like Facebook to disseminate private opinions in multi-directional conversations, to comment on others’ posts, and to pose questions to duty bearers. Whereas the duty bearers may not acknowledge or respond to such citizens’ queries, those duty bearers who are on social media can not completely run away from seeing such comments. At another level, we should recall the contention by Reuter and Szakonyi (2015) that in order for Facebook to contribute to raising political awareness (and, I add, to contribute to political change as it is believed to have done in some Arab Spring countries), it has to be politicised such as by populating it with political information. In the Ugandan case, such politicisation could also take the form of discussing more political issues such as whether the president is grooming as his successor for president his son who has swiftly risen through army ranks to command the Special Forces, or whether presidential term limits should be restored in the constitution so Museveni is forced to retire. It could also include deliberately roping political actors (such as opposition political parties) into those discussions, seeking their views and comments, or asking that they elevate these conversations to wider national circles.

It is evident therefore that the political artefact is sometimes latent and needs awakening. Most times, however, the political artefact is more noticeable as information systems such as Facebook have inherently political features, just as has been contended that all software and most social media are inherently liberating (Winner, 1980; Foner, 2002; Sclove, 1995). The awakening of the political artefact includes politicising the IS deliberately, or reducing the barriers to its politicisation, e.g. removal of the fear of government snooping on what citizens are doing and punishing those who are critical. It could also include enhancing the security features of the artefact or providing digital safety skills to users (e.g. circumvention and anonymisation tools).

In the information systems I studied, notably for paper 4, the SNS (Facebook) and other IS such as the toll free call centre had not been politicised, which partly explained the positive response the issues they reported received, in a country where leaders are thoroughly unresponsive on political matters. The monitoring by state agents of citizens’ communications on Facebook had a suffocating effect on free expression and eParticipation. As a result, Facebook in Uganda has not been sufficiently politicised. Although there is a large amount of political news and information, there is limited
deliberation, limited mobilising for public causes, and minimal campaigns that draw in large numbers of citizens or which involve political leaders (whether government or opposition) and citizens. Access to information and political knowledge are a large aspect of the Facebook IS, representing the information aspect and a major enabler of eParticipation.

But there was another aspect to the political artefact - the intermediated power relations between citizens and duty bearers (the two were initially suspicious of each other, but were each more trusting of the intermediating civil society organisation). At the start, duty bearers shunned those involved in social accountability, believing they were out to get them unfairly. Meanwhile, most citizens did not know they had the power to question leaders and service providers. Civil society organisations implementing the systems I studied stepped in as infomediaries and interlocutors between citizens and duty bearers. And they helped to raise civic awareness, informational skills, and ICT literacy among the user community. These power relations between citizens and duty bearers, as mediated by civic implementers of the complaints systems, represented part of the political artefact and in this case supported successful participation. The ability for IS to give those with an axe to grind a place to speak out, including anonymously, and to be heard by higher authorities (regardless of whether they act upon the issues expressed by citizens) could also be construed as part of the political artefact.

The social artefact was also evident and worked effectively to enable citizens to make complaints, to have those complaints received by the operators of the information systems, for the complaints to be elevated to duty bearers, for remedial action to be taken, and for feedback to be provided to citizens. In my studies, it was evident that there were important exogenous factors, that is factors that are external to the technological artefact but which affect the way it works, and in some instances are crucial to its successful functioning. For example, the toll free numbers for citizens to report service delivery failures have been pasted on walls of health centres, and adverts run on radio stations encouraging citizens to use the toll free number to file complaints. Similarly, physical meetings supplemented the digital means in providing feedback to citizens on actions taken on complaints. The role of the social artefact has also been cited by Peixoto and Fox (2016), who studied 23 ICT platforms that enabled social accountability, and found that for 14 of them, the provision of input through the dedicated platform was complemented by some type of offline action to prompt governments to respond or to monitor government responsiveness. They also determined that “combined offline action” meaning whether additional actions are
taken offline in order to encourage government responsiveness, was a crucial success factors for such initiatives.

As Lee et al. (2015) argue, the constituents of the IS artefact enable, interact with and transform one another, and in coming together as an information system they ultimately serve to solve a problem or achieve a goal for individuals, groups, organisations, societies or other social units. Indeed, as shown in the explanations in this section, the different artefacts in the information systems I studied interacted with and reinforced each other in order to solve the service delivery complaints reported. A report about missing drugs was reported through the technological artefact of a call centre or a Facebook page run by the civil society organisation. The citizen reporting had interaction with a staff of the call centre/ organisation. The staff then interacted with duty bearers to bring the complaints to their attention. Feedback mechanisms (both technology-based and through physical meetings) also exhibited the interaction of various artefacts – social, information, political, and technological. Questions future research can ponder may include whether there are good doses of each artefact that should be brought together for the IS to function effectively. What emerged indisputably in this thesis was that various artefacts (social, political, information, technology) have to be balanced for eParticipation to work effectively. In authoritarian states, it is difficult to find this right balance.

7.6 Motivating Deeper Citizen Participation and Whistle-blowing

This concluding discussion is forward-looking, as it explores ways in which social networking sites (SNS) can be useful for participation in an authoritarian country. I argue that even though direct political participation may be difficult, social networking may be conducive by, for example, contributing to social cohesion, promoting norms and ideas related to participation, and spreading information about participatory initiatives that help citizens to get the public services they are entitled to. Moreover, “Quality of public service” monitoring may sound apolitical but is in fact not, as it makes people more aware of their rights and also makes them believe that change is possible. It also makes them realise that the rights as currently stated are not cut in stone but may be changed and improved. If ICT-enabled social accountability work such as quality of service monitoring can be scaled up, it would go a long way in attracting more citizens to participate in governance processes, even if this may not be direct political participation.
such as that related to changing political leaders. Indeed, as I pointed out earlier, social accountability such as participation in quality of public service monitoring can be a breeding ground for wider eParticipation, since it gives participants civic agency, trust in using ICT for public good, and the confidence to speak out to those in positions of authority.

With the high proficiency in using ICT found by the research, there is a need to showcase how to use ICT for participation securely, including by creating awareness. The high belief in the utility of ICT to make it easier and simple for ordinary citizens to engage with leaders and with other citizens should be leveraged by both state and civil society actors. Platforms like Facebook Zero and Free Basics/ internet.org, which are accessible free of charge, could be leveraged to create participation activities. Once citizens have a taste of these freely accessible platforms, they will develop the appetite for participation in social media sphere and other ICT platforms. This partly helps to address the problem of cost but also helps to grow skills in using ICT for participation. But beyond enabling access is a need to politicise the social platforms which Ugandans are engaging on. As noted by Reuter and Szakonyi (2015), online social media usage only increases political awareness if the specific social network being used has been politicised to contain political information. Activists and political parties have the role to politicise the platforms Ugandans are using, and from this research Facebook is one such prominent SNS to focus on. Presently, it has not been sufficiently politicised.

It follows that the efforts to grow eParticipation should capitalise on the prominent C2C activities, such as posting social media updates, seeking information and news, emailing information and commenting on other citizens' posts. Similarly, seeking information and news, following leaders on Facebook and Twitter, and engaging via social media, which were the prominent C2G engagements, need to be nurtured. In politicizing SNS such as Facebook, these activities – as well as the quality of public service monitoring discussed above - should be a priority. For the C2G, citizens can engage in seeking information and news, and following leaders on Facebook and Twitter, with little likelihood of exposing themselves to reprisals or even showing their stand on a political issue.

But for all these efforts to succeed it is imperative to create trust in citizens that they can participate online securely. There is thus a need to create safe ways for citizens to engage online – such as by popularising the use of tools that can secure online users’ communications, including through anonymis-
ing their identities. Another measure to raise citizens’ appetite for eParticipation would be to document and publicise cases of citizens’ ICT-enabled actions that succeeded in attracting leaders’ attention and remedial action. That would create confidence and motivate more citizens to engage via digital platforms. It is also essential to incentivize citizens to engage with leaders. This can be achieved through leaders being responsive to issues raised by citizens, personally engaging in debates in online platforms, providing feedback on concerns expressed by citizens and providing to them regular and functional updates on their work. This calls for a greater number of government officials using ICT than is the case presently. It also requires that with the government there should be some eParticipation luminaries, champions that lead the way in using ICT for regular and engaged interactions with citizens.
8. Conclusions

In Uganda, where ICT use remains low and where there is a democratic deficit, the nature and extent of citizens’ participation via ICT has not been well documented. This thesis aimed to establish how social media can contribute to increased political participation in an authoritarian state. It studied the potential of ICT to contribute to a more democratic system and engaged public in a country where open expression is limited. The thesis was actualised through four inter-linked studies, each of which contributed to generating the knowledge presented in this thesis. The first study investigated the connection between the way individuals participate online and offline. The second study zeroed in on social network sites (SNS), notably Facebook. It examined how the use of Facebook affects the participative behaviours of individuals active in political and interest organisations and those not active in organised politics. The findings of these two studies were similar, showing that citizens were hardly embracing eParticipation, and unearthing numerous explanatory reasons. I then designed a third study to understand the differences between the ways ordinary citizens engaged online with other citizens and with political leaders, as well as the primary impediments to greater citizens’ eParticipation. The third study showed that regardless of whether it was engagements among citizens or between citizens and leaders, most citizens were spectators. This then prompted the design of the fourth study to establish whether there was a domain in which citizens were gainfully using ICT for engaging with political leaders and other duty bearers. For this, I chose the area of monitoring of public services.

To recap, the overall objective of the overall thesis was to establish how social media can contribute to increased political participation in an authoritarian state. This thesis found that the majority of Ugandans online are not involved in eParticipation. However, where individuals expected to have direct, tangible, personal benefits from using technology, they would be more likely to use it. That is why there were many more citizen-to-citizen communications relative to citizen-to-government engagements. For this reason, citizen-to-citizen engagements will likely grow, as they face fewer hurdles that are easier to navigate in the short term relative to the hurdles to engagements between citizens and the government. The implications for eParticipation in Uganda are that more efforts are needed to deepen citizen-to-citizen engagements because if citizens’ skills, trust, and experience in this area are cultivated, in future these skills and experience will form the basis for their eParticipation with political leaders.
This research has produced empirical results on the factors that make citizens shun eParticipation even when they are aware of benefits that could result from their online participation. On balance, the fears and frustrations that citizens have outweigh the benefits they perceive of eParticipation. In most instances, these fears are not lived but are based on perceptions or the experiences of others. The sum total of this is that if these fears are not addressed, the great majority of Ugandans, including those with ample access to ICT and awareness of the benefits of online participation, will for many years remain out of the fold of eParticipation. The thesis shows that citizens see more benefit in engaging with other citizens than with leaders. It is safer, more fulfilling in terms of the gratifications which citizens derive from engaging with other citizens, as contrasted to the non-responsiveness of leaders and other duty bearers to concerns raised by citizens. There is also citizens’ perceived inability to change the status quo even if they engaged public officials, which has dulled citizens’ appetite for C2G engagements.

Regarding social accountability, notably quality of public services monitoring, more citizens are willing to participate and, increasingly, ICT is enabling this participation. Social accountability is not as risky as participation in mainstream political processes (such as campaigning for a candidate in a national election, joining a movement opposing the president’s intention to stand for re-election, speaking out about corruption in the central government) as it comes with lower possibility for attracting reprisal. It also tends to require less time, effort, and skill. It is thus more possible to implement social accountability even in countries that have a democracy deficit. Distinctly, quality of public service monitoring may sound apolitical but is in fact not, as it makes people more aware of their rights, makes them believe that change is possible, and builds their civic, informational and ICT skills. However, in areas with low incomes and few incentives for users to engage ICT in accountability and whistle-blowing processes, the costs must be low or zero to motivate use of the digital platforms.

8.1 Contributions to Theory

The thesis makes distinct contributions to theory. It builds on the Information System (IS) artefact perspective as advanced by Lee et al. (2015), who argue that the IS artefact comprises of three components or sub-artefacts; technology, information, and social. The thesis moves a step further in conceptualising and theorising the IS artefact, by identifying the political
artefact in SNS when used for eParticipation. I show how SNS-for-participation contain the various constitutive aspects of the IS artefact (technology, information, social, and political artefacts), and I explain how each of them manifests in the information systems I studied. Furthermore, I argue that the various artefacts need to be aligned for eParticipation to work. This represents a development of the IS field. Earlier IS research focus was usually taken to address the ‘IT artefact’ (Akhalaghpour et al., 2013; Bembasat & Zmud, 2003; Orlikowski & Iacono, 2001). This was seen as the technical product (software), which was embedded in an “environment” of people and organisations; work situations, work practices and work processes. This is despite the fact that an information system has consistently been defined as people, technology and organisation together processing information for some purpose; in other words, a system. Recently there have been efforts to clarify the focus of IS research, for many reasons. One is that the focus for IT use has changed. Technology use is no longer restricted to work situations; in fact, other uses may be dominating. There is no clear work organisational focus of social media. Hence the concept of IS artefact is gaining ground. This concept includes the social situation and the information handled.

Of the three components of the IS artefact identified by Lee et al. (2015), the present study has in particular focused on the social component as this was found to be most complicated, and hence most of an obstacle to development, in the context of eParticipation in Uganda. But Lee et al. (ibid) also called for research into the political artefact, contending that a political component in an IS artefact might be represented by the interaction of a citizen with online government systems. It is important to isolate the political artefact and to show examples of how the social, political, technological, and informational artefacts work together in an information system. While a practical contribution of this thesis is hence to describe how an IS artefact can be designed so as to improve citizen participation in a country with an authoritarian regime, a theoretical contribution is to exhibit the considerable importance of specific aspects of “the social artefact”, i.e. in this case the political component, and to provide an example of how IS artefact design can help to produce desired results. The results show that IS design matters a lot, it shows that any part of the IS artefact can make or break the entire system regardless of the quality of the other parts. This is important for many reasons, but from the perspective of this thesis a major importance is to do with the fact that in this time of globalisation, importantly manifested in the rapid proliferation of internet access and use across the globe,
it is important that people in developing countries get to use the new opportunities IT brings in similar ways to people in the industrialised and democratic world. In fact, most countries in the world are not very democratic. Many are outright undemocratic, but also many have formal democratic institutions but of poor quality. This study shows that even in such countries, development of democratic qualities and institutions is possible provided one focuses on “low hanging fruit”, things that bring some direct benefits and can actually be achieved in a short-term perspective, and provided IS artefact design is done skilfully.

Clearly this thesis studies only one country and the specific details of the successful examples presented here may not be directly transferable to other countries and other fields of activity, but the principle can. The thesis shows that by considering all aspects of the information system artefact and focusing efforts on the right things, in this case the social/political artefact, change is possible.

Over the past decades, the interest in the IS field for the political aspects of IS has weakened. Winner (1980) was an early proponent of the political artefact, but since then there has not been much discussion of the political artefact, or identification of what it is in information systems. The arguments made by Winner more than three decades ago are valid today: 1) technologies can be used in ways that enhance the power, authority, and privilege of some over others; 2) some technologies are by their very nature political in a specific way, and adopting a given technical system unavoidably brings with it conditions for human relationships that have a distinctive political cast e.g. centralised or decentralised, egalitarian or inequalitarian, repressive or liberating. Similarly, Markus (1980) posited that central to the political perspective on information systems implementation are the intention, motivations and desires of key actors, users and designers. According to her, the political perspective attempts to explain shifts in the balance of power among various groups. More recently, scholars have also spoken to these issues, but without pinpointing what constitutes the political artefact. Brey (2007) argued that technology could help individuals or groups exercise power over others by giving them new powers or by improving the effectiveness and ease by which existing powers was exercised. Similarly, Sclove (1995) wrote about technologies that negate democracy, such as those that establish authoritarian relationships or support illegitimate hierarchical power relations between groups, organisations, or polities; and those that are vulnerable to catastrophic sabotage and the attendant risks of civil liberties abridgement.
In drawing the link between technology and democracy, it is important to understand whether technologies are substantively democratic, that is, whether a technology’s design and use is compatible with perpetuating democratic social relations (Sclove, 1999). In line with this thinking, Foner (2002) made the case for creating political artefacts, described as “technological devices intended to facilitate particular political aims - in this case, to enable certain civil liberties to be more easily protected worldwide.” But, it should be recalled that the IS artefact is a hybrid sphere or collective comprising of humans and non-humans (Coeckelbergh, 2007), and technology is shaped by social, economic and political forces. Accordingly, Brey (2007) contends rightly that the political implications of technological artefacts do not result from their physical design but from a combination of their design features, the meanings and interpretations attached to the technology and the social and material structures and correlated practices in which the technology is embedded.

The second contribution of this thesis is to the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM). I found that the postulations of the CVM theory were not entirely applicable in an authoritarian context where a fear of reprisals meant that access to the internet and having civic knowledge hardly translated into eParticipation. Moreover, in an environment where citizens have no trust in their anonymity and security being assured by the channels of participation, they will be deterred from participating even if they wanted to vent their political frustrations. In these circumstances, the CVM is insufficient to explain motivation for participation by Ugandans.

The thesis finds that the use of SNS has a big possibility to increase political knowledge. Similarly, it offers a possibility to mobilise support for political causes, recruit members, while also supporting individuals to seek information and to participate in debates at affordable cost and with relative ease. I contend, however, that citizens can have a high motivation, superb means to participate, and also be connected to recruitment networks, but still have little likelihood to participate. I have thus established that the Civic Voluntarism Model (CVM) does not sufficiently address the factors that stop participation even when the resources are available. Specifically, I have argued that the CVM theorists did not exhaustively delineate some of the factors that negate participation, and in authoritarian countries these include the effect of fear of reprisals and political apathy. While the thesis agrees with the primary premises of the CVM, namely that it is when the costs are low and the benefits high that people participate, proponents of the model did not envision “cost” to include the possible reprisals that a
person believes using ICT for political purposes can result in: the higher the likelihood and the more severe the likely reprisals, the more the cost of participating goes up and the less likely an individual is to participate. In this Ugandan context, many of the benefits that social media is believed to bring in Western democratic societies, and which the CVM suggests as the incentives for participation, are thus turned on their head.

While the CVM has been widely used, there has been previous criticism of its completeness and applicability, such as failure to explain non-participation by individuals that have the resources to enable them to participate (Phelps, 2006; Rubenson, 2000; Zavadskaya & Welzel, 2013; Pattie et al., 2004; Phang & Kankanhalli, 2005). But these critics did not sufficiently go beyond criticising to establish possible factors that would explain non-participation even when the requisite resources were in place. One contribution of this thesis is hence that I have explained some of these factors in an authoritarian country context, such as the effect of fear of reprisals and political apathy.

8.2 Contribution to Practice
As for eParticipation (and ICT4D) practice and research, this thesis has produced empirical evidence on the nature of eParticipation in Uganda, a developing country with a democratic deficit. Most research published on the effect of new media use and participation discusses developed, democratic countries, while that on eParticipation on authoritarian regimes is on countries with far greater income and ICT access levels than Uganda. This thesis provides pragmatic knowledge to some of the gaps in contemporary literature regarding the connection between online participation and offline participation in authoritarian contexts. It has developed an understanding of both citizen-to-citizen and citizen-to-government participation and identified the key hindrances to eParticipation at the two levels. The thesis also identifies needed actions in order to grow eParticipation in spite of the various challenges currently ranged against meaningful eParticipation in the country. The motivations, as captured in section 7.6, are critical to boosting citizens’ and government’s uptake of eParticipation. There has been research that pinpointed the challenges to eParticipation in contexts similar to Uganda. This research has rarely gone an extra mile to establish how to motivate deeper citizen participation in spite of these challenges.

The thesis also makes a contribution to practice by drawing out how the success factors for ICT-enabled social accountability could be enhanced, as
well as how to address some of the primary challenges. Additionally, I found that citizens considered that it took less time, effort, and skill to engage in this kind of whistle-blowing relative to participation in more mainstream political processes. The social accountability arena can thus potentially be a breeding ground for wider eParticipation activities. This is because by engaging in social accountability, the resulting civic agency that grows in citizens, the trust they gain in using ICT for public good, the confidence they gain through speaking out to those in positions of authority, all augur well for such citizens’ future online political participation. The thesis shows that a large number of challenges must be addressed simultaneously for whistle-blowing systems to work. For the eParticipation field, notably concerning how citizens in low resource and low ICT use countries such as Uganda can more meaningfully engage in social accountability and governance processes, the thesis provides some empirical knowledge that can form the basis of further studies and interventions.

8.3 Final Remarks
The thesis takes some important steps in generating an understanding of the nature and challenges of using ICT, including social network sites such as Facebook, and how this use affects political participation in an authoritarian context. The study finds that the social accountability sector can provide a pathway to more citizens participating and government officials being more responsive. Future research that builds on my work in this area would be useful in further establishing ways to facilitate greater eParticipation even in authoritarian contexts where political participation and government responsiveness levels tend to be low. My thesis has also generated fresh knowledge on the Information System (IS) artefact and discusses what constitutes its sub-systems in eParticipation systems. Research that further explores the concept of the political artefact, and which articulates the social, informational and technological artefacts in information systems, including those used in eParticipation, and how the different artefacts should interact in order to solve societal problems, would be very useful.
References


European Commission. (2003). The Role of eGovernment for Europe's Future. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions, Brussels


Kitzinger, J. (1994). The methodology of Focus Groups: the importance of interaction between research participants. *Sociology of Health and Illness*, 16, 103-121.


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Annexures
Annex 1: Questionnaire for paper 1

1. Gender
   a) Male  b) Female

2. Age group
   a) Under 18  b) 18-24  c) 25-34  d) 35-49  e) 50 and Over

3. Average monthly income (UGX)
   a) Less than 200,000
   b) 200,000 – 500,000
   c) 500,000 – 1,000,000
   d) 1,000,000 and above

4. What is the highest level of education you have attained?
   a) Primary  b) Secondary  c) Vocational  d) Tertiary  e) Bachelors  
f) Postgraduate

5. Where and how often do you access the Internet from?

   Daily  Weekly  Monthly a month  Less than once  Never
   Home  □  □  □  □  □
   Work  □  □  □  □  □
   Café  □  □  □  □  □

   Community centre  □  □  □  □  □
   Mobile phone  □  □  □  □  □

   Other (please specify)
6. Please rate the level of your knowledge and proficiency in use of the following technologies:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Workable</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Search engines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email family</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sharing documents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And Photos (as attachments)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute to online discussion groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of social media (Twitter, Facebook etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMS on cell phone</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogging</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downloading files (documents and media)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video conferencing (Skype, Google plus etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7. How many online groups that in any way have political discussions or activities are you a member of?

8. What motivated you to join these online political groups?

9. Would the motivators (in 8 above) also make you join political action in real life?
   a) Yes  b) No
   Please explain your answer:

10. Are you a registered or card-carrying member of a political party?
    a) Yes  b) No
11. How often do you engage in each of these activities online? *(Please tick wherever applicable)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>2-5 times a week</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Don’t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Looking for political Information on the web</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visiting a political Organisation’s website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussing politics in a chat group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joining an email discussion about politics</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downloading documents (manifestos, politicians speeches) from a political organisation website</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sending an email to a politician or political Organisation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signing an online petition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donating funds online to a political cause</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteering online to help with a political cause</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joining a political Organisation online</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
12. How often do you engage in each of these activities offline?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Don’t know</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>2-5 times a week</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussing politics With friends/family</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contacting an elected official</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging in strike/protest Activity</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donating money to a Political cause</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending a rally</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joining a political Organisation</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively campaigning for a Political organisation</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signing a petition</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Others (please specify)

13. In which sphere (offline or online) are you more likely to engage in each of the following activities, and why? Please tick the medium where you are more likely to take part in the particular activity.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Online</th>
<th>No difference</th>
<th>Reasons</th>
<th>Offline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Discussions/Deliberations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information seeking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campaigning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voting/Polling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petitioning/lobbying</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundraising/donating</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating with Leaders/politicians</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek membership of an organisations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14. What factors facilitate or constrain your use of ICTs for civic participation/democracy?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Lack of] awareness</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security concerns</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15. Please list any other constraints you encounter in using ICTs for civic participation

16. Do you find it easier to express yourself more frankly offline or online? If so, why is this so?

17. How, if at all, is the internet encouraging your participation in the political affairs of
your country?

18. What makes you decide whether to be active or silent in the online/ Facebook political groups to which you are a member?

19. What other activities/ tasks do you undertake online besides those outlined above?

20. Do you share the information you get on civic matters with others?
   a) Yes               b) No

21 A. If yes, which people and how often do you share the information with?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spouse</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neighbour</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workmate</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
<td></td>
<td>□</td>
<td>□</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21 B. When you decide not to share information, why is that so?

Thank you.
Focus Group Discussion Guide

Consent Process
Consent for focus group participants should be secured by all those seeking to participate before the discussion commences.

Thank you for agreeing to participate. We are very interested to hear your valuable opinion on the reasoning of social network site users in relation to political content and discussion. The purpose of this study is to understand differences in the reasoning of people who are active in political or interest organizations as opposed to people not active in organized politics.

The information you give us is completely confidential, and we will not associate your name with anything you say in the focus group.

We would like to record the focus groups so that we can make sure to capture the thoughts, opinions, and ideas we hear from the group. No names will be attached to the focus groups participants. You may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at anytime.

We understand how important it is that this information is kept private and confidential. We will ask participants to respect each other’s confidentiality.

Please indicate at this stage if anybody is not willing to participate in this focus group discussion.

Introduction:
1. Welcome
   Introduction Wakabi and notes-taker, institution, aim of the FGD.
   Review the following:
   • Who we are and what we’re trying to do
   • What will be done with this information
   • Why we asked you to participate

2. How the FGD works and why focus group is being used.
• Researchers learn from FGD participants
• No answer is wrong
• It is fine to disagree or to agree with others’ views
• Feel free to speak English or a local language
• Discussion will last no more than 90 minutes.

3. **Ground Rules**
   Ask the group to suggest some ground rules. After they brainstorm some, make sure the following are on the list.
   • Everyone should participate.
   • Information provided in the focus group must be kept confidential
   • Stay with the group and please don’t have side conversations
   • Turn off cell phones / silent mode
   • Be as participative/ interactive as possible

4. **Turn on Recorder** (after explaining to all why you’re recording – to get an accurate capture of the discussions so as to avoid incomplete and misleading or erroneous reporting– and getting consent of all to be recorded).

5. Ask the group if there are any questions before we get started, and address those questions.

6. **Introductions**
   • Go around table.

**Questions for the Discussion:**
Let’s start the discussion by talking about participation and e-participation. [Explain what participation means and the activities which are generally as constituting participation]
Are you free to express your political views freely on social media?
How well/ efficiently do Facebook and other social media enable political participation?

But some say new forms of media are promoting political cynicism and apathy...
Are the ties you make on social media, conversions you make and activities you engage in via social media stimulate participation?
Are there causal effects of social media on political knowledge?
<what makes that possible?
< would you start participating simply because it has been made easier by technology?
Are there attempts to recruit you to a political or civic group via social media sites? (These can include ‘save Mabira campaign’ or ‘black Monday movement’ – as much as it involves mainstream political parties).<are u connected to any political groups/ politicians/ activists online? <what do you think of an invitation to join a group vs being able to access info on a group on your own? which is likelier to make you participate or join a join a group.

What motivates you to take part in political processes: time, money, skills; interest, knowledge, efficiency?

That concludes our focus group. Thank you so much for coming and sharing your thoughts and opinions with us. In case you have any questions now or in future regarding this, please contact Wairagala Wakabi on 0772 406 241, email: wakabi@cipesa.org.
Annex 3: Questionnaire for Paper 3

SURVEY ON KNOWLEDGE, ATTITUDES AND PRACTICES OF CITIZENS ON THE USE OF ICTS IN CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND DEMOCRACY MONITORING IN UGANDA

This survey is being undertaken to assess the informational and ICT skills and needs of Ugandan internet users and their effect on citizen participation. The survey also aims to establish the behaviour and attitudes of citizens on the use of ICT tools and services in civic and political participation. The survey will benefit my employer, the Collaboration on International ICT Policy for East and Southern Africa (CIPESA), which uses ICT to advance democratic governance, and it will also benefit my academic studies at Orebro University. Participation in this study is voluntary. You have a choice to opt out of the interview at any point. The information you provide will be kept confidential and will not be shared with anyone other than the research team. We therefore request that you feel free to provide frank and honest answers. Any queries should be directed to me, Wairagala Wakabi (0772 406241), the Principal Researcher. Thank you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Gender</th>
<th>2. Age group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Male</td>
<td>Under 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Female</td>
<td>18-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>25-34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35-49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50 and Over</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. What is your highest level of education?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Primary School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Secondary school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Vocational institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) University (diploma, degree)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Post graduate (Masters, PhD, etc)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4. What is your average monthly income (Uganda Shillings)?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) less than 250,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) 250,000 - 500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) 500,000 - 1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) 1,000,000 - 2,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e) 2,000,000 and above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>5. Which of the following best describes your current position? (Select only one response)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) University lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Local government official or staff</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Media</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6. Where do you mostly access the internet from?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a) Tablet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Mobile phone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Desktop/Laptop at home or work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) Internet cafe</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Please rate the level of your knowledge and proficiency in use of the following technology tools and services: *(Please tick wherever applicable)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool/service</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Workable</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Google and other search engines</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email (including sharing photos and documents as attachments)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribute to online discussion groups/ chats</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of social media (Twitter, Whatsapp, Facebook, MySpace etc)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMS on mobile phone</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blogging</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Downloading files (documents and media)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Video conferencing (Skype, Google Plus etc.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. How often do you use these ICT tools and services? *(Please tick wherever applicable)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Search engines –</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WhatsApp</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online discussion groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMS via mobile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. What are your main sources of information on governance/political matters? (Please rank in order of importance with 1 as most important and 5 least important)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of information</th>
<th>Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspapers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word of mouth from individuals (family, neighbours, friends, colleagues)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church/mosque</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet search engines – Google, bing, etc –</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct interaction/discussions with government officials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government documents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGO/Civil society reports and websites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other please specify</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
10a. Do you share with others the information you get on governance/ political/ civic matters?
   a) Yes            b) No

10b. If yes, which people and how often do you share the information with?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relation</th>
<th>Frequency of sharing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbour</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workmate</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siblings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious leaders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Civil society/community based organisation members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (Specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10c. When you decide not to share information, why is that so? (Please explain)

__________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________________

11. In order of priority, please list the four main information needs in your community that are currently not met?
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.
12. What is your perceived usefulness of ICT for monitoring on government programmes and public services delivery? *(Please tick wherever applicable)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Everyone uses ICT so it is better I use it too</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using ICT would make my monitoring of public services easier and simple</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would monitor better if I use ICT as compared to other means</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would easily communicate with public officials</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is faster, effective and productive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is more secure to use ICT</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It is less costly for me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, I find use of ICT more useful than other means of monitoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. Are you involved in the monitoring and reporting on government/ public services delivery?  
   a) Yes  
   b) No

14. Do you use ICT to monitor or report on government/ public services delivery?  
   a) Yes  
   b) No

Please provide an explanation for your answer above. If the answer is yes, please mention the ICTs you use and how.
15. How important do you think it is to monitor the following services? (Rate 1 – 4 where 1 means don't know, 2 - not important, 3 – important, 4 – extremely important)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health services delivery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government Expenditure tracking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education services delivery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug stock-outs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capitation grants tracking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government plans and budgets</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human rights violations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral processes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. Have you used ICTs to engage with officials in any of the above mentioned services?
   a) Yes  b) No

   If yes, please indicate how

17. In what ways and how often do you use ICT to engage with other citizens on issues of community or national concern (social, political, economic...)?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of engagement</th>
<th>Frequency of engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email information (including forwarding documents)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post social media updates (facebook and Twitter)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in politics-related online discussions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobilise via SMS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participate in radio/tv debates (live call ins, sms strips)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Write in local press or community newsletters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seek information and news</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comment on other’s posts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send/Receive text messages</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (Specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

18. In what ways and how often do you use ICT to engage with duty bearers (government officials, public services organisations) in issues of community or national concern (social, political, economic...)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of engagement</th>
<th>Frequency of engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email requesting information/ documents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Following duty bearers on social media (Facebook and Twitter)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engaging via Social media (Facebook and Twitter)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in online discussion forums with public officials</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in radio/TV debates (live call ins, SMS strips)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commenting on political websites</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking information and news</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others (Specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
19. What factors hinder your greater use of ICT to engage with other citizens and duty bearers (please tick as implacable to each group)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Other Citizens</th>
<th>Duty bearers</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literacy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Costs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Lack of] awareness of tools availability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security concerns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low confidence in outcomes including getting feedback/response</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

20. Please provide any additional comments/suggestions
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

THANK YOU!
Annex 4: Focus Group Discussion Guide for Paper 4

Consent Process
Consent for focus group participants should be secured by all those seeking to participate before the discussion commences.

Thank you for agreeing to participate. We are very interested to hear your valuable opinion on the use of ICT platforms for social accountability especially for improving public services delivery. [Explain main objects of research]

The information you give us is completely confidential, and we will not associate your name with anything you say in the focus group.

We would like to record the focus groups so that we can make sure to capture the thoughts, opinions, and ideas we hear from the group. No names will be attached to the focus groups participants. You may refuse to answer any question or withdraw from the study at anytime.

We understand how important it is that this information is kept private and confidential. We will ask participants to respect each other’s confidentiality.

Please indicate at this stage if anybody is not willing to participate in this focus group discussion.

Introduction:
7. Welcome
   Introduction Wakabi and notes-taker, institution, aim of the FGD.
   Review the following:
   • Who we are and what we’re trying to do
   • What will be done with this information
   • Why we asked you to participate

8. How the FGD works and why focus group is being used.
   • Researchers learn from FGD participants
   • No answer is wrong
• It is fine to disagree or to agree with others’ views
• Feel free to speak English or a local language
• Discussion will last no more than 90 minutes.

9. Ground Rules
   Ask the group to suggest some ground rules. After they brainstorm some, make sure the following are on the list.
   • Everyone should participate.
   • Information provided in the focus group must be kept confidential
   • Stay with the group and please don’t have side conversations
   • Turn off cell phones / silent mode
   • Be as participative/ interactive as possible

10. Turn on Recorder (after explaining to all why you’re recording – to get an accurate capture of the discussions so as to avoid incomplete and misleading or erroneous reporting– and getting consent of all to be recorded).

11. Ask the group if there are any questions before we get started, and address those questions.

12. Introductions
   • Go around table.

Questions for the Discussion:
What are the main public services delivery issues that are reported through your platform, and how do you handle reports that citizens send in?
   <How do you inform citizens of the outcome of the issues that are reported?

What is working with the use of ICT in your social accountability for public services delivery work?
   <How has ICT use made your work easier and more effective?

In what ways is ICT not working as you would have expected? And why is this so?
Let’s talk about the number of people that are involved with your ICT platforms on monitoring social accountability? Are the numbers rising?

How do we get more people to report on public services delivery and on other issues of concern to the communities through our platforms?

What role do the members of Voluntary Social Accountability Committees play in ensuring that reports are made and followed up on?

In what ways have ordinary citizens participated in the ICT-enabled social accountability efforts you manage?

What would you say has been the ways in which ICT has changed the capacity of citizens to participate in social accountability?

What impact do you see from the work of your social accountability or whistle-blowing work?

Has there been any changes in attitudes, knowledge and skills for citizens and for VSACs which were necessary for their participation in the projects?

What are the main challenges faced by these initiatives.

What do you see as the main success factors?

Can you explain what you consider “success” for this project, and give examples of where there has been success?

Recommendations to improve the working of the project?

That concludes our focus group. Thank you so much for coming and sharing your thoughts and opinions with us. In case you have any questions now or in future regarding this, please contact Wairagala Wakabi on 0772 406 241, email: wakabi@cipesa.org.
Publications in the series Örebro Studies in Informatics


